

Sight and Sound

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MAGAZINE
AWARDS

27 PAGES OF
FILM, VIDEO
AND BOOK
REVIEWS

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Lillian Gish's purity
Chubby Brown's vulgarity
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Sight and Sound



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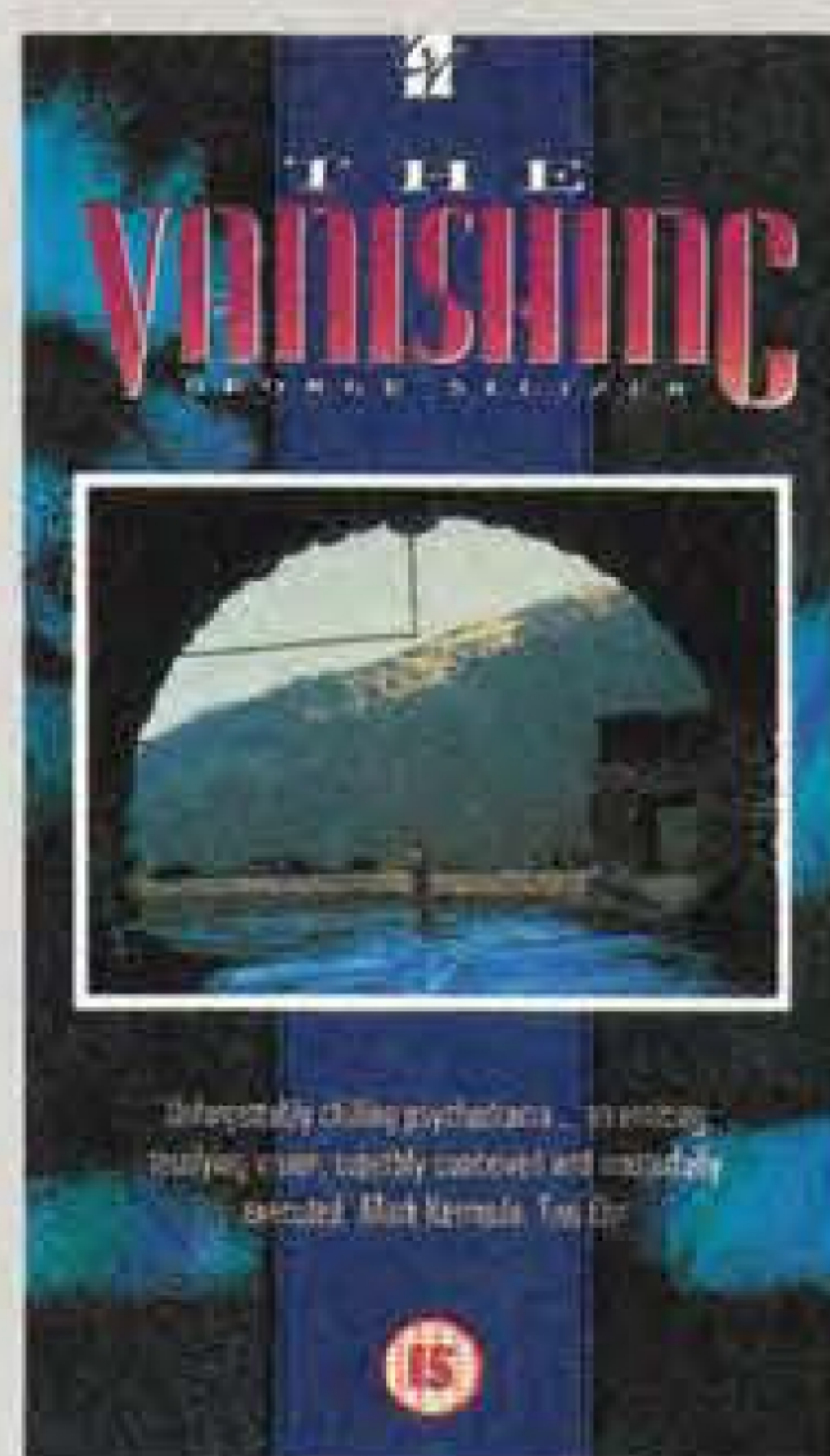


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Fires have started

Contributors to this issue

Martin Barker is the author of *A Haunt of Fears*; he is currently working on a study of filmic and comic book versions of *The Last of the Mohicans*

Steven Bode is director of the Film and Video Umbrella

Richard Dyer was recently appointed Professor of Film, University of Warwick

Michael Eaton is an award-winning scriptwriter

Lorraine Gamman is the author of *Female Fetishism*

Philip Kemp is writing a study of Michael Balcon

Peter Matthews is a freelance writer

Colin McArthur's most recent book is *The Casablanca File*

Geoffrey McNab is the author of *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry*

Kim Newman is a critic and novelist

Berenice Reynaud writes for *Libération* and *Cahiers du cinéma*

Amy Taubin is completing a study of *Taxi Driver*

Since film is for most of us something we experience in cinemas, it needs an act of the imagination to remember just how vulnerable a material it is. The serious nitrate film fire, which occurred at Hendersons Film Laboratories on 4 July and which has been woefully underreported, is a tragic reminder of the fragility of our film heritage. Of 384 National Film and Television Archive titles temporarily in storage there, an estimated 40 per cent have been either destroyed or damaged, and the full extent of the losses won't be known until forensic and insurance checks have been completed.

Among the losses is the restoration print of Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*. This may not represent an irretrievable loss – although it will take some time to replace, at a cost of £2,500. But it does illustrate how vulnerable these materials are.

Until 1951, most professional 35mm films were produced on cellulose nitrate-based film stock, which has two great weaknesses – it is highly flammable and chemically unstable. Nitrate's high flammability contributed to the intensity of the Hendersons fire – cellulose nitrate, once ignited, can burn without oxygen and will remain burning under water, sand or foam until it has burnt out.

It is, however, nitrate's other weakness, its chemical instability, that film archives worldwide have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Cellulose nitrate effectively begins to decompose from the moment of its manufacture. Over time, gases given off by the nitrate base interact with the image-carrying emulsion layer, resulting initially in the gradual bleaching of the photographic image – usually the first sign that action needs to be taken quickly. At the next stage, the emulsion turns sticky; later the reel becomes soft and blisters are created. Finally

the reel becomes a congealed solid mass or a heap of brown powder.

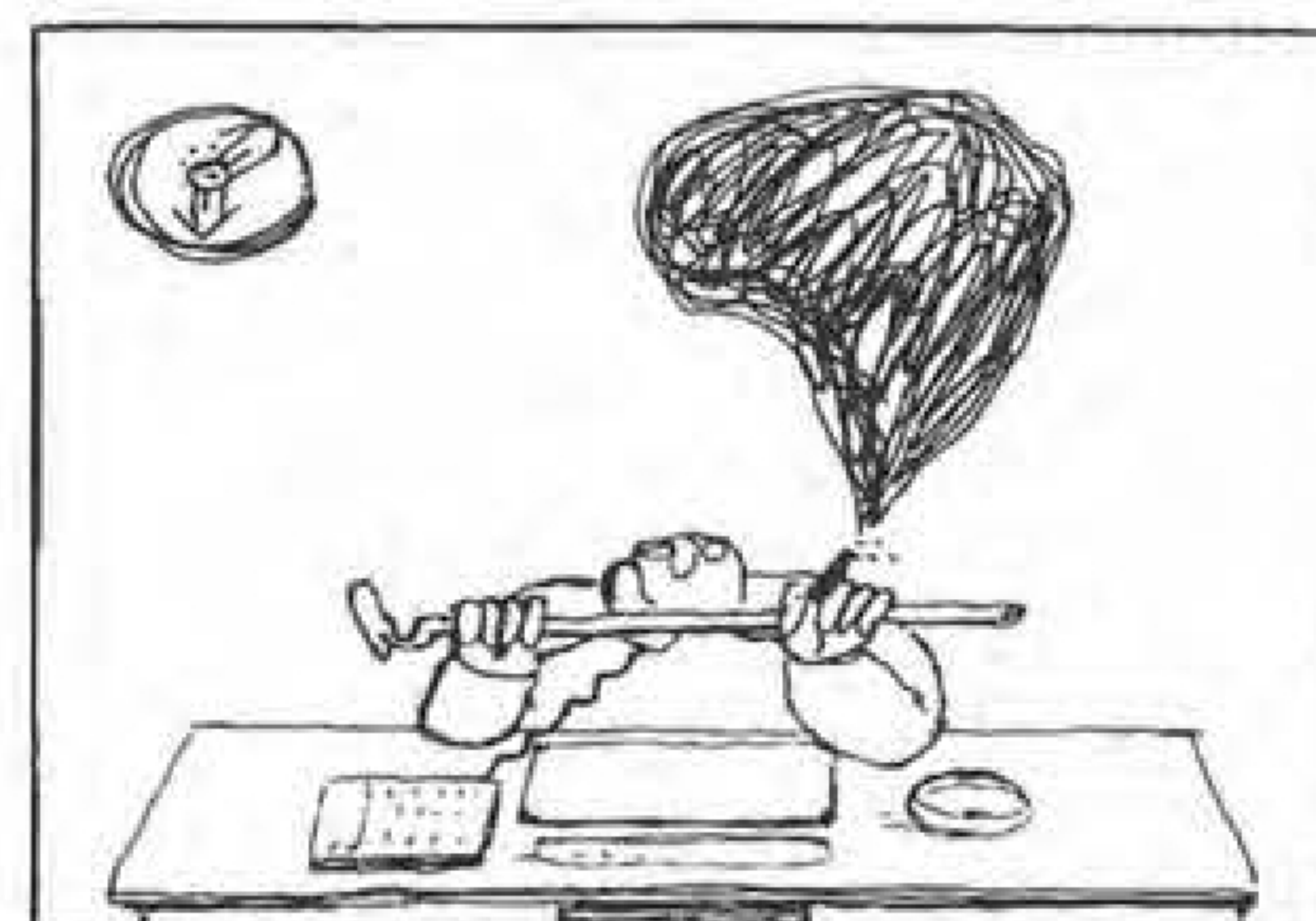
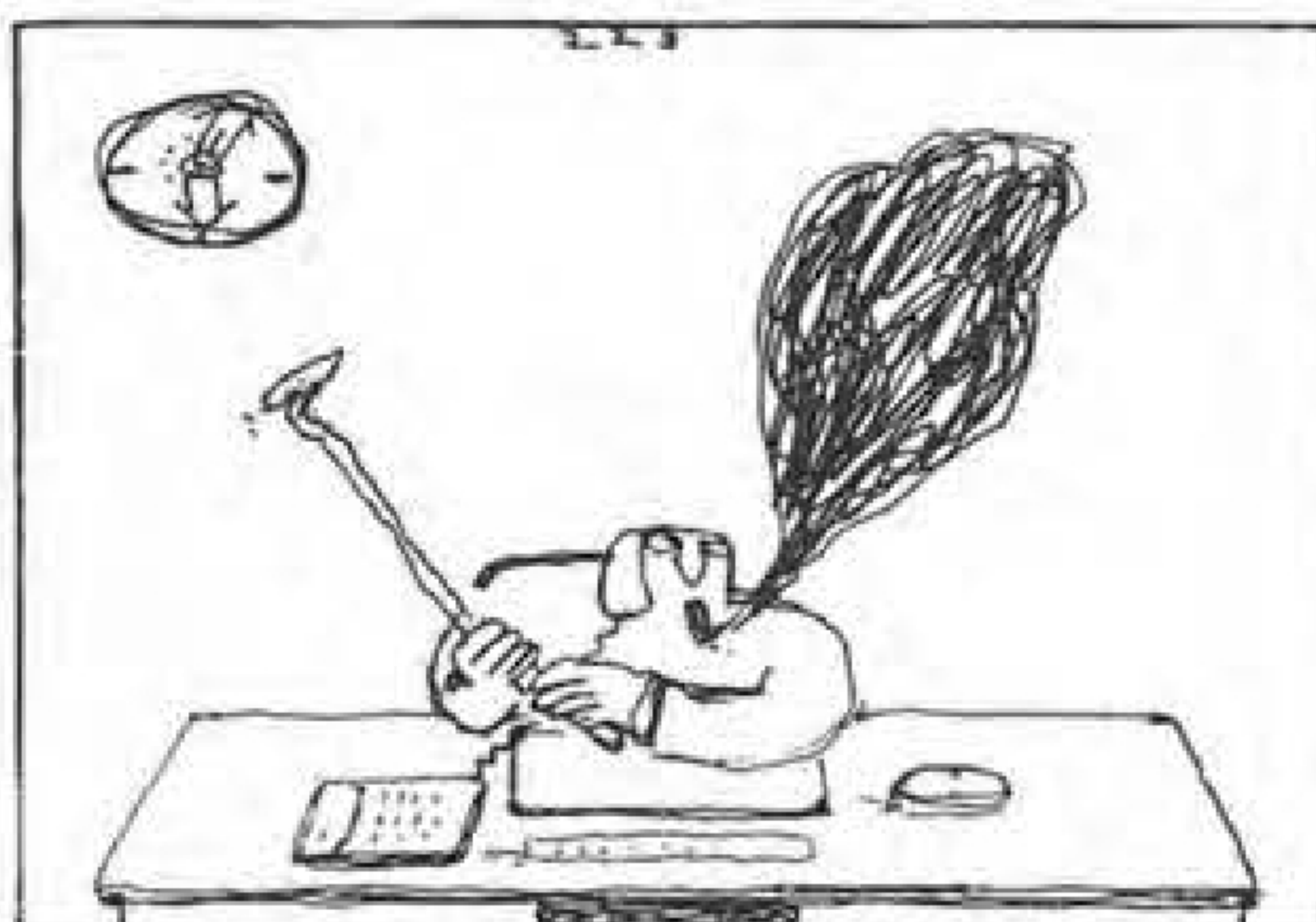
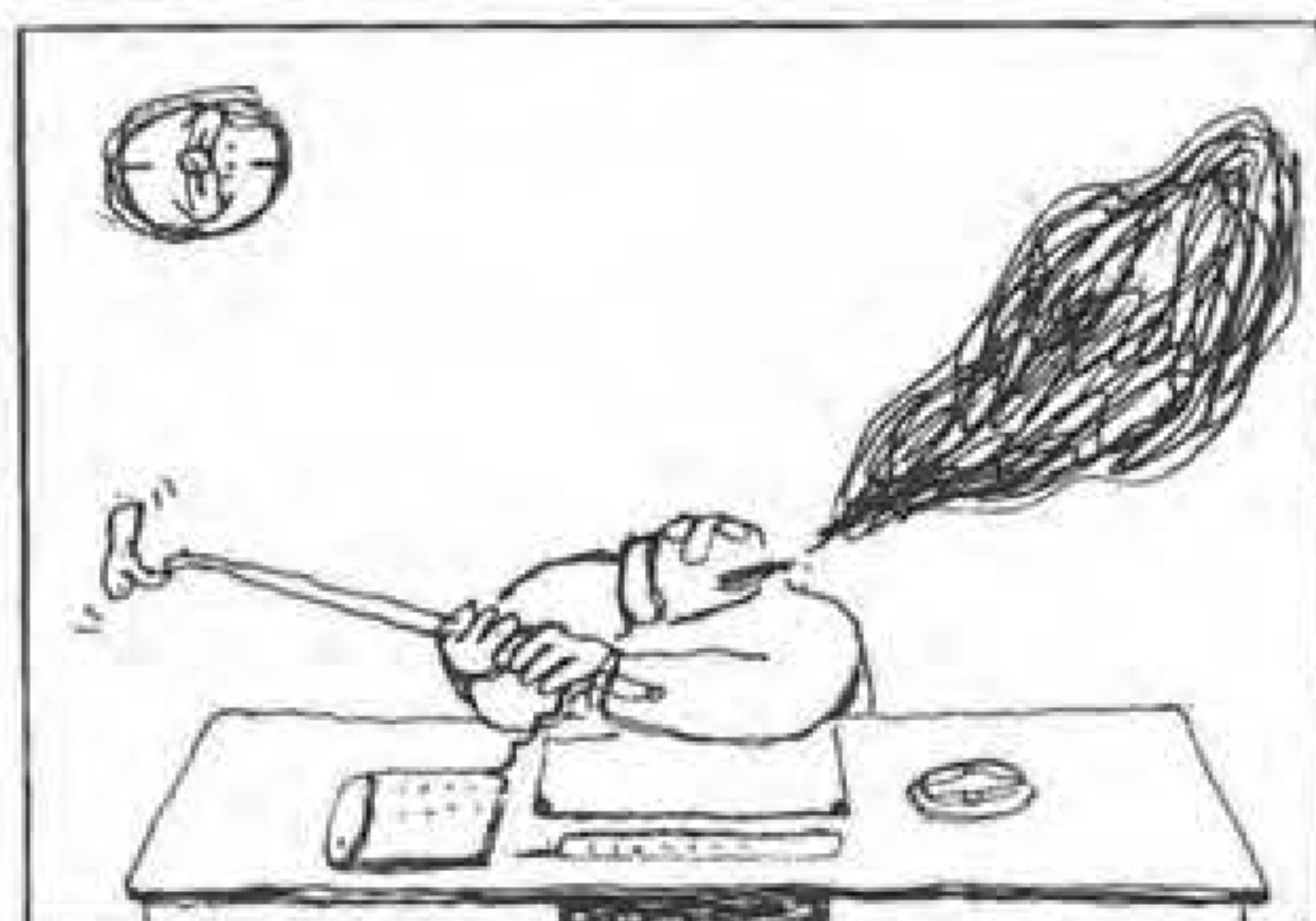
In effect, this means that all cellulose nitrate-based film is doomed. The images it carries will eventually be lost unless it can be copied on to modern safety stock – hence the phrase “nitrate won't wait,” adopted as a slogan of the film archiving movement. This is why many archives – including the National Film and Television Archive in London – follow a rigorous programme of examination of their nitrate holdings to identify material which is physically at risk so that it can be copied before it reaches the point of no return. Others, with greater resources or relatively smaller amounts to cope with, aim to copy all nitrate as soon as it enters the collection.

The Hendersons fire is one of a number of nitrate fires in Europe and North America over the past 20 years in which valuable material has been lost. Such incidents should lead organisations and individuals still holding nitrate collections to give serious consideration to the long-term preservation of their material. This makes both cultural and economic sense. Rights holders cannot exploit material that has literally rotted away, nor can audiences see and enjoy it.

The bottom-line message is to bring out your nitrate and offer it to your local national archive. Only a designated body like a national film archive is usually able or authorised to harbour this dangerous and fragile material and to carry out systematic copying. Too much has already been lost through neglect, decay and accident. When an incident like the Windsor Castle fire occurs, it causes a public outcry about the preservation of historic paintings; it shouldn't be forgotten that the cinema heritage needs at least as much care.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, for 2 weeks I'll get up, have breakfast, play golf, followed by lunch & more golf & later over dinner we'll talk golf. There'll be no script problems, no disappointing screen averages, no star tantrums, no expensive reshoots... Jerry do you think 2 weeks is pushing it a bit?'

The business

● A familiar question: why is it that Australia, with a population less than a quarter that of the UK, has been able to supply the world with feature films, mini-series, soap operas and game-show formats in a more or less continuous flow over the past 20 years, while the UK's output in almost all these categories has run the gamut from trickle to dribble? Lots of suggestions have been put forward, ranging from landscape (lots of it, mainly empty, encouraging the kind of mythic encounters that don't really work in the Cotswolds) to culture (less of it, encouraging greater adventurousness).

But as with so much else in the moving picture business, the real answer probably has to do with money. Consider this hypothesis: the more conservative a country in its attitude towards money, the less likely it is to have a successful movie industry. Witness Italy, India and Hong Kong on the unconservative side, Switzerland and the Netherlands on the other.

In Britain we have far too anal an attitude towards money to come up with the kind of risk capital a movie business needs. Australia, on the other hand, has steered a remarkable middle course between the fiscal chaos of Italy and the dollar-reverence of the US. In a nutshell, the Australian assumption is that money, like life, has no absolute value: it depends on what you make of it.

Recession has introduced a conservative note into Australian attitudes over the past five years or so, bringing down the more financially 'inventive' entrepreneurs like Bond and Skase. But there are signs that a fresh dawn may be breaking. Chief among these is the new Paul Hogan film, *Lightning Jack*, the story of a superstitious outlaw that is due to start shooting this month in Arizona and New Mexico.

Produced by Australian production/distribution/exhibition company Village Roadshow, *Lightning Jack* is the first Australian film ever to be financed by means of a public offering on the Sydney stock exchange. And – in the aftermath of Hogan's success with the two *Crocodile Dundee* films (a reputation not even mildly dented down under by the complete flop of his 1990 US film *Almost an Angel*), the response has been overwhelming, with the first print run of offer documents snapped up within days. The offer closed as we were going to press, whereupon a US version – based on something called American Depository Receipts – was launched by the Bank of New York.

Now if we could just get something like that going here... Apart from anything else, Asil Nadir would be back like a shot.



Wagons roll again: Mario Van Peebles' 'Posse', about the soldiers who become black cowboys

Speaking of fugitive tycoons, the once mighty Giancarlo Parretti – the former Italian waiter who got as far as buying MGM before anyone realised he didn't have the money, has now turned his back on an ungrateful west and is heading for former Soviet Georgia, where he has recently announced new plans to buy up the local television network.

Mr Parretti's former associate and supplier of funds, Florio Fiorini of the octopus-like Swiss holding company SASEA, meanwhile, is enjoying a short rest in a secure institution closer to home, courtesy of the Swiss government.

All of which enables one belatedly to recruit MGM's 1934 'The Thin Man' to the cause of intertextuality. Clearly, when Nora (Myrna Loy) comes home to find a drunken party going on and comments to her husband (William Powell): "Oh, Nick, I do love you! You know such wonderful people!", she was referring to the movie business.

● Italian producer Angelo Rizzoli, who has an excellent track record of supporting upcoming talent like Gianni Amelio (*Il ladro di bambini*) but whose one stab at the 'international market' was Jerzy Skolimowski's dire *Torrents of Spring*, has cut back sharply on his ambitions. Foremost among his current projects is a new film from Italy's portly poet of voyeurism, Tinto Brass, whose movies rarely travel, but who seems well able to guarantee bums on seats (and hats on laps) among Italy's male moviegoing population.

The new film, aptly enough, is

entitled *L'uomo che guarda* (*The Man Who Watched*) and stars former Bergman associate Erland Josephson.

In the same tasteful vein, connoisseurs of gauzy, sun-dappled erotica will be pleased to hear that genre specialist David Hamilton has finally, after half a decade of announcements from a series of producers, begun casting a remake of his best-known movie, 'Bilitis'. The hunt is apparently on for a lithe, experienced, photogenic 17-year-old. And, according to sources close to the production, the search is limited to Germany, because the actress has to have blue eyes.

Now leaving aside the historical echoes of this particular line of reasoning, I really don't see why that fact is so important. With that amount of back lighting and filters, no one will be able to see the colour of the eyes. Even supposing that any of the film's intended audience would notice anyway.

● Latest actors eligible for the Marlon Award (see S&S May) for hopping round the other side of the camera include hooper Gregory Hines, who is to direct *White Man's Burden*, a film about an interracial love affair, and *Crying Game* star Forest Whitaker, who will make his debut with a thriller called *Number Four*, helpfully described by TriStar as "Die Hard on a bus". Actress Talia Shire, meanwhile, is following (some 25 years on) in the footsteps of brother Francis Coppola by having her directorial debut – an erotic thriller called *One Night Stand* – produced by Roger Corman.

And stand-up comic Denis Leary – whose profile outside the US is mainly

restricted to late-night television and occasional spots on MTV – has signed a deal to direct a movie for US cable channel Showtime.

Re the 'News at Ten' becomes 'News at Six Thirty' row: could this be the first real sign that British television watching – which for decades has been absolutely rigid, with the power grid groaning as kettles are switched on in the breaks of the most popular programmes – may be moving towards the moveable feast (or, as Raymond Williams called it, flow) of US television?

The ITV companies' recent gloating press release about satellite-dish sales falling below target overlooks the massive take-up on cable, particularly in the south of England. Although the BARB figures are too determined by existing patterns to reflect it, surely more viewers now take the smorgasbord approach to television, in contrast to the three-course meal that used to be Britain's staple diet?

And although the author of this column normally disagrees on principle with anything said by Greg Dyke, does "what happens in America" really dictate our news needs in the way that the members of the Parliamentary Commission suggested?

● It's official: just in time for the 20th anniversary of his disputed demise, a judge in San Francisco has ruled that Elvis is dead. Several members of the public had to be escorted from the court for booing and shouting abuse following the ruling.

Long in development in different parts of Europe, the feature debut by Anna Campion (sister of Jane) is finally to be made

as the first official UK-New Zealand co-production. The film, which has gone through a number of title changes from 'Acid' to 'Into the Woods', has for the time being settled under the tag 'Bloody Weekend'. It tells the story of a group of teenagers who head off to a country house, having taken the substance referred to in the original title, take a walk of the kind described in the second one, and end up with what it says in the third.

Originally set to be co-produced by Munich distributor Wolfram Tichy as part of a two-film deal with the BFI (the first, now completed but being re-cut after a market screening at Cannes, was 'Psychotherapy'), Campion's film was rewritten to shift the location from London (where there isn't any film subsidy money) to Cologne (where there's lots).

The final package has been put together by the Auckland and Sydney-based partnership of John Maynard and Bridget Ikin who, between them, boast the very impressive track-record of Vincent Ward's 'Vigil' and 'Navigator', Jane Campion's 'Sweetie' and 'An Angel at My Table', and Alison Maclean's debut 'Crush'.

The film is expected to be shot in the autumn of this year.

● On the subject of siblings, it is beginning to look as though Bill Clinton has found his own Billy Carter, in the shape of brother Roger. Rog's antics have already proved that, whatever a spin doctor may do for the Man in the White House, there's always a family member not far away who can undo it in a matter of a few seconds.

The First Brother's latest reported



Lifting the siege: the late Sergio Leone, whose Leningrad project has been revived

achievement is to be cast in the cheapo franchise flick *National Lampoon's Last Resort*, being produced in Toronto by skin 'n' action specialist Ashok Amitraj. Rog was originally approached to play a cameo, but Amitraj was reportedly so delighted with his casting coup that he gave him a number of lines and a song to sing as well.

How much of Baghdad will have to be flattened in order to offset that one?

One of the biggest projects of the 80s, 'The Siege of Leningrad', which Sergio Leone had at an advanced stage of development at the time of his death, has finally been revived. Producer Alberto Grimaldi managed to keep

the project – which was to have been an Italian-Soviet co-production – going for some time after Leone's death, but eventually let it lapse.

Now it looks to be back on track, with Volker Schlöndorff set to direct. And, given Schlöndorff's night job as head of the old DEFA studios in Babelsberg, it seems likely that a lot of the work will be done there rather than in Russia.

Other changes are possible, too. Under Leone, the film was rumoured to have a \$100 million budget, which would have made it the most expensive film of all time. Under Schlöndorff, it's likely to cost a good deal less.

And, if recent large-scale Schlöndorffiana like 'Un amour de Swann' ('Swann in Love')

and 'The Handmaid's Tale' are anything to go by, it won't turn out to be half as good, either.

● Finally, in case you hadn't heard, the wagon wheel has come full circle and the Western is in the midst of one of its periodic comebacks. In addition to the Paul Hogan epic referred to above, there are two Wyatt Earp movies rolling or due to roll this summer: *Tombstone* produced by former Carolco partner Andy Vajna, with Kurt Russell in the title role and a promising newcomer called Kevin Jarre behind the camera; and a Lawrence Kasdan version, with Kevin Costner as the Marshall and Dennis Quaid as Doc Holiday.

There are also, inevitably, a few revisionist others: Mario Van Peebles' *Posse*, about the Buffalo soldiers who became black cowboys; Tamra Davis' *Bad Girls*, starring Madeleine Stowe, Drew Barrymore, Mary Stuart Masterson, Andie McDowell and Cynda Williams; and *Outlaws* produced by Tim Burton's partner, Denise De Novi, and directed by John Duigan. Plus Walter Hill is in the midst of a Geronimo biopic in Moab, Utah.

But all is not well in the New West. *Tombstone* originally promised cameos from such veteran range-riders as Glenn Ford, Charlton Heston and Robert Mitchum. Sad to report that after a day or so in the saddle, Mitchum's back was giving him so much trouble he had to withdraw.

And greenhorn director Jarre's feet didn't stay long in the stirrups, either. After a few days he was off the film, under conditions which can only be guessed at by the fact that sources at Vajna's production company, Cinergi, seem reluctant to admit that Jarre ever existed. Some idea of how bad things must have been are provided by the fact that he was replaced by George Pan Cosmatos...

In much the same neck of the woods – well, up in Wyoming, to be precise – producer Robert Halmi was having major problems with Nicol Williamson, star of his latest addition to America's cultural heritage, *Return of Lonesome Dove*. Things came to such a peak of non-communication that Williamson walked. Again, the name of the actor flown in to replace him should give some idea of just how desperate the situation had become: Oliver Reed.

Correction: In last month's comments on the marketing of 'Cliffhanger' and 'Jurassic Park', the descriptions got switched. It was 'Cliffhanger' that had a terrific trailer (it recently won a marketing award) and 'Jurassic Park' which – hard as it may be to believe – parcelled out the information in tiny snippets.

But the point of the story remains the same: 'Last Action Hero' was a marketing disaster in the US.

MOSCOW NOTES

In his speech at the opening ceremony of this year's Moscow Film Festival, Sergei Solovlev hit out at the festival's critics by "inviting them to stop drinking their bile and to begin enjoying the rich cinematographic champagne on offer." That the head of the Russian Cinematographers' Union chose a moment usually reserved for celebratory statements to fire such a frank retort showed just how grave the MFF's position has become. With the fall of the ideology that used to support this unique gathering of film-makers, the festival has noticeably lost the impetus which gave it its *raison d'être*. It has tried to re-orientate itself, a manoeuvre made all the more difficult by the problem of securing financial backing in the topsy-turvy world of Russian economics. Several potential sponsors for this year's festival were fledgling businesses, and ten days before the planned opening there was still no backer willing to pay for this "champagne".

However, economic uncertainties are not the only reason why serious sponsors were so unforthcoming. At the time of the last festival, the

competition programme came in for heavy criticism because it contained hardly any new films of merit (see S&S October 1991). This year's competition line-up shows that little has changed, with the organising committee continuing to play on its weaknesses by trying to imitate and muscle in on a market which several European festivals already cater for. The futility of this approach was made all the more pathetic by the opening night's presentation of Attenborough's *Chaplin*, a film long available in Moscow's pirate video salons.

On the strength of its reputation, the Moscow festival still has the potential to be an international stage for film-makers from the former Soviet Union. Yet this year it was beaten hands down by the inaugural Festival of Festivals, held in St Petersburg in June. Planned as an annual event, the Festival of Festivals filled a gap by providing a stage for a comprehensive screening of cinema from the CIS.

Moscow's remit is more global – and it must be said that a reasonable programme of Russian and Kazakh films is being offered – but if the

competition line-up is used as a guideline, then you could be forgiven for thinking that in the organisers' opinion, Russian film-making is no longer a viable option. Ten days before the festival, *Children of the Iron Gods*, an unexceptional debut by the Hungarian Tomasz Tot, became the then sole Russian entry. At their annual get-together in Sochi in May, Russian film critics placed this film a distant fifth – well behind Oleg Kovalov's beautiful *Island of the Dead* and Sergei Ovcharov's contemporary social satire *The Drum Roll*. After some determined barracking of the committee, *The Drum Roll* became a last-minute competition entry.

Against this debilitating background, an exhibition of the director Rustam Khamdamov's paintings, drawings and sketches, together with stills from some of his films, has opened in the Cinema Museum. It is in fact an exhibition of non-films, for Khamdamov has had all his films banned, stolen or destroyed. This poignant epithet to Khamdamov is showing for the duration of the eighteenth Moscow Film Festival.

Tom Lasica



**Playful and ironic, 'Last Action Hero' belongs to a burlesque film tradition that includes 'Hellzapoppin'.
By Jonathan Romney**

ARNOLD THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Arnold Schwarzenegger seems to have been asking for trouble by parodying *Hamlet* in *Last Action Hero*; no one in Hollywood is immune to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, not even as apparently inviolable a sweet prince as him. *Variety* went so far as to suggest ways in which the titan – brought low by overweening hubris – could set about re-inventing his career. But *Last Action Hero* is already too thorough-going an exercise in self-reinvention, or at least self-deconstruction, to satisfy a market that prefers to take its stereotypes neat.

Among the charges brought against the film is that it is in bad faith. But bad faith is hardly a flaw of *Last Action Hero* – it's the film's *raison d'être*. The complex film-within-a-film framework means that it partakes at once of 'genuine' action-genre requirements and of the 'irresponsible' parody exemplified by *Airplane!*, *Naked Gun* and the Mel Brooks canon. *Last Action Hero* is neither fish nor fowl, but a strange self-regarding hybrid that owes its characteristics to a long line of nested narratives represented in film by *Hellzapoppin'* at one end of the scale, Godard at the other; and in literature by *Don Quixote* (whose hero, in Book Two, has the unusual experience of reading his own adventures in Book One). Another example, of course, is the play-within-a-



play of *Hamlet* – suggesting that the trailer in *Last Action Hero* for an apocryphal Arnie movie is more totemic than arbitrary.

Last Action Hero has been criticised for the narcissistic pride it takes in refusing to provide the satisfactions expected from an Arnie movie proper. But the film constantly theorises its own relation to the Arnie canon. Much of *Last Action Hero* is taken up by a film-within-a-film, *Jack Slater IV*, supposedly starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. But the climactic twist comes at the New York premiere of *Jack Slater IV*, at which the real Arnold Schwarzenegger – or more accurately, Schwarzenegger playing a fictional representation of himself – tells the press that the body count in his new film is significantly lower than in its predecessors, in keeping with kinder, gentler public tastes.

Most reactions to this scene have been to accuse the film of mealy-mouthedness. For Arnie to pander to public tastes in this way, the argument goes, is both cynical and a denial of the reason people watch his movies anyway – precisely to see him waste bad guys. It seems like an excuse: a way of letting him off the hook for making an uncharacteristically tame kids' movie – *Last Action Hero*, that is. But this scene

Blown inside out: the hero, Jack Slater, meets his young fan Danny in the topsy-turvy world of 'Last Action Hero', opposite; Slater steps out of the screen, below left

simply alludes to a debate already raised more covertly, but just as ironically, in *Terminator 2*, in which Arnie's android persona responded to the low-body-count imperative by maiming, rather than killing, his adversaries.

The argument against this interpretation is that *Last Action Hero*, by making its workings explicit, is trying to hoodwink us as to its true nature – giving us the impression that it is not an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, when it knows damn well that it is. According to this line of reasoning, the film is trying to turn the patent flaws of *Jack Slater IV* into the manifest merits of *Last Action Hero*. Apparently selling itself under false colours, it is attempting to absolve itself from meeting the generic demands of the action movie.

Yet this same ploy is already at work within 'straight' examples of this sequel-ridden genre, which push their conventions to the limits of repetition and absurdity in order to revitalise them – the same old trick becomes a variation on the same old trick as long as a collusive understanding can be established with the audience as to how that trick might be perceived as being at once the same and different. At its simplest level, this strategy is exemplified by the hero's exclaiming 'Here we go again' when a situation repeats itself – as when Bruce Willis, in *Die Hard 2*, marvels that yet again he's required to save the day at Christmas (the opening of *Last Action Hero* immediately signals one referent when a harassed cop exclaims, "This is one hell of a way to spend Christmas").

Series like *Die Hard*, *Lethal Weapon* and Schwarzenegger's own vehicles parody their own conventions, either within individual films or from film to film, in order to signal themselves as 'quality' genre product – as being more aware of their own constituent parts and therefore, theoretically at least, superior to 'pure' genre fodder, to the Chuck Norris canon, say. These films try to pass themselves off as being at least more honest about their own automatism. But *Last Action Hero* goes one step further. It is neither more dishonest nor more honest than those 'real' action thrillers; it simply takes self-awareness to an extreme.

Last Action Hero certainly makes its reception all the more difficult by espousing a form most commonly associated with off-mainstream areas – either modernist art cinema or the burlesque. As a film-within-a-film commenting on its own make up and reception, *Last Action Hero* is flanked on one side by the paradoxes associated with the literary tradition of self-referentiality, and on the other by self-deconstructing comedies like H. C. Potter's *Hellzapoppin'* (1942).

Last Action Hero's film-within-a-film is a classic example of *mise en abîme* – to use the heraldic term that André Gide brought into critical use to denote small-scale representations or analogues of a work within the work itself (for example, the play *The Mousetrap* in *Hamlet*, whose plot it mirrors). This is a tradition most famously represented in literature by the parables and paradoxes of Jorge Luis Borges, and by Gide's novel *Les Faux-monnayeurs* (*The Counterfeiters*), ►

◀ which concerns the writing of a novel entitled *The Counterfeiters*.

In film, Fellini's *8½* and Godard's *Passion* dramatise their own fabrication in similar ways to Gide's novel, addressing in particular authorship and its responsibilities, and the problems attendant on generating fictions. But outside such auteur-centric examples, filmic *mise en abîme* is likely to be concerned less with the author's travails than with the spectator's. Often, it is a case of undermining the assumptions of the viewing process by 'infecting' filmic illusion with the conditions peculiar to live performance. Starting from the bases of the non-illusionistic music-hall/burlesque tradition, such films have used *mise en abîme* to defuse cinema's claims to transparent representation of the world and to disarm the excessive readiness of viewers to project their desires into the celluloid image. It is a strategy that can be traced from Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Junior* (1924), in which a sleeping projectionist 'projects' himself into the screen; via more anarchic fantasies such as W. C. Fields' *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* (Edward Cline, 1941), much of which consists of

Low and loner: comedy duo Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson in 'Hellzapoppin', a Chinese box of a film, below; Arnie as Jack Slater as Hamlet in 'Last Action Hero', right



a producer's incredulous reading of an un-filmable Fields script; and up to Joe Dante's recent *Matinee*, which by way of tribute to B-film huckster William Castle waxes nostalgic for an age in which cinema still partook of the unpredictable live dimension of music hall.

These all play on our desire to project ourselves into film space as if it were co-extensive with the space inhabited by the viewer. In *Sherlock Junior*, Keaton walks into the screen and gets booted out again; in *Hellzapoppin'*, the spectator is not only addressed directly, but also caught in the cross-fire of banter between the on-screen characters, the projectionist and other figures who sporadically invade the stalls.

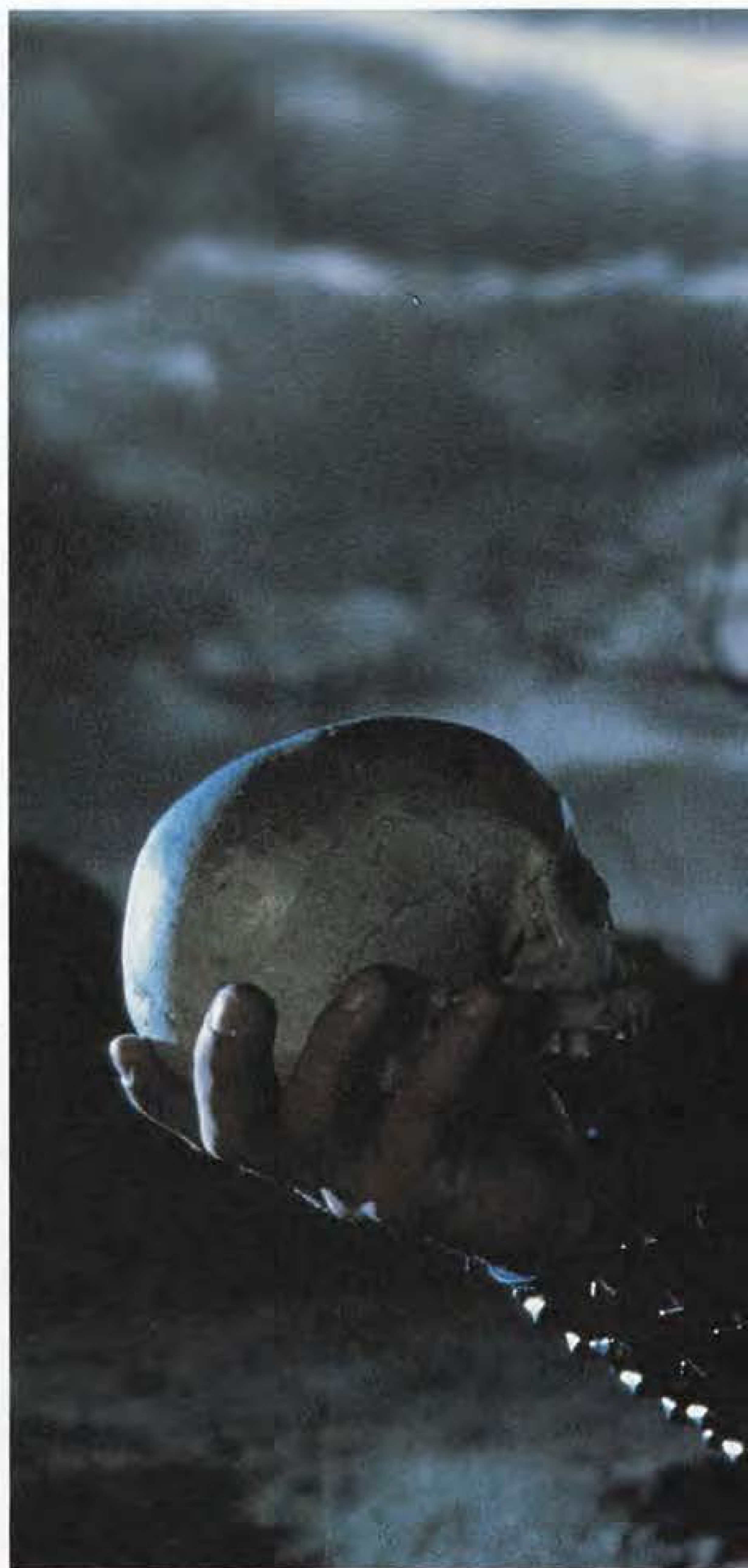
Such devices often lend themselves to tendentious agendas, notably the assignment of value to different types of cinema. 'High' cinema, supposedly, can be sorted from 'low' on the basis of the sort of illusionism entailed. Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1984) harks back to *Madame Bovary* in its evocation of the perils implicit in projecting one's desires on to the flickerings of celluloid. Its Depression-blighted heroine finds the hero of a romance stepping off the screen to woo her, sparking off much debate about the status of a character who becomes

independent of his author. In one of those metaphysical disputes so beloved of Woody Allen, the existence of a controlling deity is argued for: "There must be a reason for everything. Otherwise it would be like a movie with no point."

Such dilemmas hark back to Borges' conundrums, in which *mise en abîme* as a literary device entails a wider uncertainty: "if the characters in a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious." In Maurizio Nichetti's 1989 film *Ladri di saponette* (*The Icicle Thief*), the hero (also called Maurizio Nichetti) finds himself trapped in a television set, having entered it to correct the faulty showing of his own film (also called *Ladri di saponette*). Here, however, the metaphysical question – the status of the characters *vis-à-vis* their dethroned author-god – is put to the service of a specific comic agenda: at once to parody the neo-realist canon and to make a piqued comment on the way films shown on Italian television fall casualty to an enforced promiscuity with soap powder commercials (in this case, one bleeds into the other, and impoverished 40s housewives end up in a Shake 'n' Vac world).

However, *Hellzapoppin'*, the *locus classicus* of the burlesque *mise en abîme*, shows that such films can't be expected to adhere to their declared agenda. The film that most thoroughly establishes the possibilities of infinite regress, this comedy vehicle for the now largely forgotten Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson was inspired by – but in no way a direct transcription of – the Broadway show that made the duo's name. The film begins with the screening of a film called *Hellzapoppin'*, complete with credits, before we realise that we are actually watching the shooting of that film. The shooting is quickly aborted by an enraged director who goes on to show the comic duo his version of the film he wants them to star in. "It's a picture about a picture about *Hellzapoppin'*," he explains, although the film we then see turns out to be nothing of the kind. One of the consistent pleasures of this form is the way films establish specific rules governing the boundaries between film and reality and then proceed to transgress them. Indeed, one of the most disappointing things about the Woody Allen and Maurizio Nichetti films is how rigidly they adhere to the schematic boundaries they set up for themselves; arguably, the pleasure of this form of narrative lies precisely in its willingness to lose track of itself.

What *Last Action Hero* has in common with *Hellzapoppin'* is an awareness of the exceptional density of possibilities that a film can accommodate, and that are precluded by simply demanding that it either concerns itself with a world of known rules or ignores the possible entirely by establishing its own hermetic schema of parallel reality. The pleasure of *Last Action Hero* lies in the way it exceeds the apparently stable distinctions it has established between the real and the non-real, between the picture and the frame. The seemingly coherent world of *Jack Slater IV*, a universe ruled by the laws of the action genre (people don't get hurt, good guys win), is riddled with flaws. In such a world, what would be the possible interest in watching *Terminator 2*? Yet the video is on sale at Slater's local video store – albeit starring Sylvester Stallone. And if *Termina-*



tor 2 exists in that world as a film, how can that film's evil android (Robert Patrick) turn up at the deluxe Los Angeles police headquarters where Slater takes Danny?

The sort of coherence that might prevail in a classic science fiction parallel world story is clearly surplus to requirements here. It's the refusal to limit possibilities that's all-important. The police station is clearly not a real police station, even within the terms of Slater's world. It is simply Hollywood Central, the heart of movie dreams, where futuristic Amazons, robots and rabbis, and the real Sharon Stone, turn up between engagements alongside a 'sampled' image of Bogart and a cartoon cat out of *Roger Rabbit*. It's a Hollywood utopia in which all cinema's possibilities exist simultaneously.

This sense of impossible excess has its forebears in the tradition. In *Sherlock Junior*, Keaton's dreaming self walks straight into the drawing room of the film he is watching. But no sooner is he within the screen than the scene changes in quick succession to a seaside, the African bush, a snowy waste – settings violently at odds with the syntax of a silent era detective drama. The point is, once again, that immersion in one film means immersion in cinema with *all* its possibil-



'Last Action Hero' is a case of Arnie playing against himself... When Slater and 'Arnold' meet, it's remarkable which seems the more real

ities. If a film flouts the divide between the real and the fictive, why not, then, flout the divide between one film and all possible films?

Likewise, Olsen and Johnson are seen striding across the sound stage for what is presumably the *Hellzapoppin'* they are about to make, and as they cross separate sets, their costumes change accordingly – tricorns for a Louis Quatorze ante-chamber, Eskimo suits for a snow scene with igloos (complete with a sledge marked *Rosebud*). None of these scenes could possibly figure within the film they are planning, yet they have a place in a virtual film that *doesn't* get made.

This sort of self-reflexivity refuses to limit a fictional world to the requirements of realism. The film within *Hellzapoppin'* may not require sledges and powdered wigs, and may not actually break all historical and geographical boundaries as well as all generic ones; the important thing is that we can imagine a film that would. All that is required is a skim through the repertoire of possibles, a visit to the prop room of movie dreams.

Implicit in this desire for totality, though, is a sense of exhaustion. *Last Action Hero*, like *Hellzapoppin'*, suffers from an omnivorous desire to exhaust every possibility, to sup, however

briefly, from every generic plate. Both films also attempt to exhaust the totality of all commentaries that can be made about them by pre-empting them (in *Last Action Hero*, Danny comments on the impossibility of the films' stunts, while he performs them). But in *Last Action Hero*, which carries finality in its very title, there is the sense of a more drastic exhaustion. The action genre is itself worn out, because it has run through all its possibilities; and the genre fan, thoroughly schooled in its conventions by Danny's running exegesis, may never be able to watch another example of the genre again. The film does, indeed, represent a pre-emptive act of hubris on the part of its makers, who are effectively ensuring that we will never take seriously a *Die Hard* III, a *Lethal Weapon* IV, a *Terminator* 3. Sure enough, it's the end of the line for Slater, who lays down his badge and rails against his pre-scripted existence: "Hollywood is writing our lives." It's a neat touch – reality directly redeems the movies rather than it happening the other way round, as films have taught us to expect.

But what's also exhausted in the process is the Schwarzenegger persona. *Last Action Hero* is not simply a case of Arnie playing himself for laughs, as he did in *Kindergarten Cop* – it's a

case of him playing against himself, devaluing his image as a 'real person'. The 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' we see at the *Jack Slater IV* screening – vain, garrulous, determined to plug his burger joint – seems a shadow of Jack Slater, the three-dimensional cop with a history, a lifestyle, a tragic side (even if it has been wittily demonstrated that the divorced-loner pathos that forms his character has been minutely constructed by screenwriters). When Slater and 'Schwarzenegger' meet, it's remarkable which seems the more real. The film demonstrates what, after all, we already know: Slater has been constructed, but so has Arnie, whose persona, no less than his body, is 'built'. Arnie as cop, as Hamlet, as 'Arnold' are all on the same level, sharing the same cartoon consistency.

Last Action Hero is cinematic hara-kiri. It's hard to imagine that after it, any other Arnies will be possible – at least, any Arnies that seem more real than a cartoon cat or a virtual Bogart. Not the least achievement of *Last Action Hero* is to make us ask whether or not we want to accept Arnie as anything more than the signature on the burger wrapper.

'Last Action Hero' opens on 30 July and is reviewed on page 46 of this issue

What happens when a movie is mated with a computer game? By Steven Bode

CLOCKING THE FUTURE

Although this summer's box-office head-to-head between Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, the latest Schwarzenegger vehicle *Last Action Hero* and the movie version of the mega-selling computer game *Super Mario Bros.* has been hyped up as a veritable Battle of the Dinosaurs, the vogue for larger-than-life heroes and productions provides as accurate a signpost as any for the way Planet Hollywood is heading. Should this seem a depressing prospect, one can at least find solace in the fate of the original dinosaurs: slow to adapt to a changing environment, they were in the end superseded by a wave of smaller competitors who simply proved more agile and intelligent.

If today's movie juggernauts do find the earth crumbling under their feet, it's likely that the threat to their existence will come not from the margins of the film world, but from the new 'smart' technologies of interactive multi-media and video, and computer games. Even more than video, the computer game seems perfectly cast in the role of cinema's cuckoo in the nest: the ugly duckling kid whose facility with the latest technology unlocks a wholly different way of relating to moving images – one based less on identification with a character and more on direct interaction with the screen; less on the experience of unravelling a linear narrative and more on controlling the branching scenarios of a game.

And computer games have emerged as a rival in a much more tangible sense, too. Having captured the hearts of the pre-teen generation like no one since Disney, the industry has gone on to amass the sort of vital statistics that make Hollywood's biggest contenders seem positively puny. (Nintendo players in 40 per cent of US households; Sega chalking up worldwide sales of \$300 million for *Sonic the Hedgehog 2*.)

Super Mario Bros., the movie is Hollywood's attempt to get in on the most popular computer game icons of all. But if it's hard to see what directors Annabel Jankel and Rocky Morton were attempting, it's easy to spot that it hasn't worked. Eschewing most of the surreal manga elements that make the game so interesting and playing down electronic screen-based effects in favour of a sub-Tim Burton set-bound affair, they certainly haven't done themselves any favours. Super-faithful to the details and devices of the Mario games, the movie misses by miles when it comes to conveying the

quickfire energy that makes them such a delight to play.

Following on from *Tron* (Disney's movie-as-computer-game extravaganza which bombed with the 80s Pac-man generation) *Super Mario Bros.* looks destined to take its place as the second movie to fail to straddle the parallel worlds of computer game and cinema screen. Which is strange, considering the extent to which the dynamics of the video game left a mark on so many 80s action movies.

With their machine-like ciphers of characters relentlessly ploughing a one-track tunnel-vision course, both Cameron's *The Terminator* and Verhoeven's *RoboCop* capture something of the adrenaline logic of the serial shoot-em-up, their scattershot clusters of kills and profligate bursts of edits and effects owing as much to the kinetics of the video game as to a broader tradition of comic book ultra-violence. John McTiernan's original *Die Hard*, in which Bruce Willis strips down to Street Fighter essentials to blast a route through an enemy-held fortress of a building, is another instance of an action pic underpinned by a strikingly game-like structure, in particular in Willis' suspenseful progress up the various levels of the stronghold or down its murky labyrinthine paths.

Although it features no shoot-outs or agent-of-vengeance savagery, Harold Ramis' *Groundhog Day* also has a strong game-like feel. Bill Murray's predicament (that he must re-live the same day over and over) is elaborated as a proliferating field of possibilities that he must learn to 'play', picking his way through a series of more or less predictable events that rise to meet him as soon as he rises from bed. With its intricately repetitious trial-and-error structure (especially in the scenes where Murray learns how to piece together the way to Andie McDowell's heart, only to be knocked back again), it will strike a chord with anyone who has played the same game scenario over and over again through one long *Sonic the Hedgehog* day.

Multiple shoots

In the recently released *Last Action Hero*, movie-mad kid Danny Madigan – whose immersion in the cinematic universe of action icon Jack Slater has reached a point where he's able to second guess every aspect of his hero's formula films – is given a 'magic ticket' that catapults him into the movie itself. In the to-and-fro between one side of the screen and the other that is the film's recurring motif, *Last Action Hero* plays post-modern games with the conventions of movie reality while vividly expressing the technological fantasy of physically entering a movie and interacting with its central character.

For the time being, the high-resolution *Last Action Hero* CD ROM video game, which features actual footage from the movie mixed in with state-of-the-art graphics, may constitute the best way of furthering



Set, match but no game: 'Super Mario Bros.'



From level to level: 'Groundhog Day'

that illusion – at least until the fully three-dimensional virtual reality environment of Arnievision comes onstream (still several years away, you'll be relieved to hear). A more tangible mode of interaction will probably take shape with an integrated multi-media playback form (revolving, at the moment, around CD ROM/CDI). In the case of *Last Action Hero*, you could watch the linear version of the film and choose to stop at certain points for background or illustration. You could access a pull-down Schwarzenegger biography; skip the bit where Arnie talks about his restaurants; set your favourite part of the film to music: in short, take the whole 'is it real or is it Memorex?' question into another dimension. If, in the film, Schwarzenegger is engaged in an all-out deconstruction of his action persona, it is nothing compared to the possible relativising effect of this new technology.

Multi-media's super-marriages of image, text and sound, together with digital's ability to recombine and cannibalise all manner of material from present and past, may end up spawning ever more mutant hybrids of the kind that are increasingly appearing in Japan. Clearly they are also having the effect of prompting closer points of contact between previously demarcated corporate fields. Underneath its monolithic exterior, Hollywood is beginning to experience the change. Lucas Film and others are currently pioneering a number of ways to place movie characters in games environments. It is now increasingly common to find studios engaging special second unit teams to shoot extra material

(multiple points of view and so on) for a video-game tie-in. The *Last Action Hero* game was made in this way: developed concurrently with the movie and marketed immediately upon its release. Take the whole thing one stage further, with extra crews filming alternative storylines, and you can start to imagine the film's interactive premise attaining some measure of reality.

Cameron and Spielberg

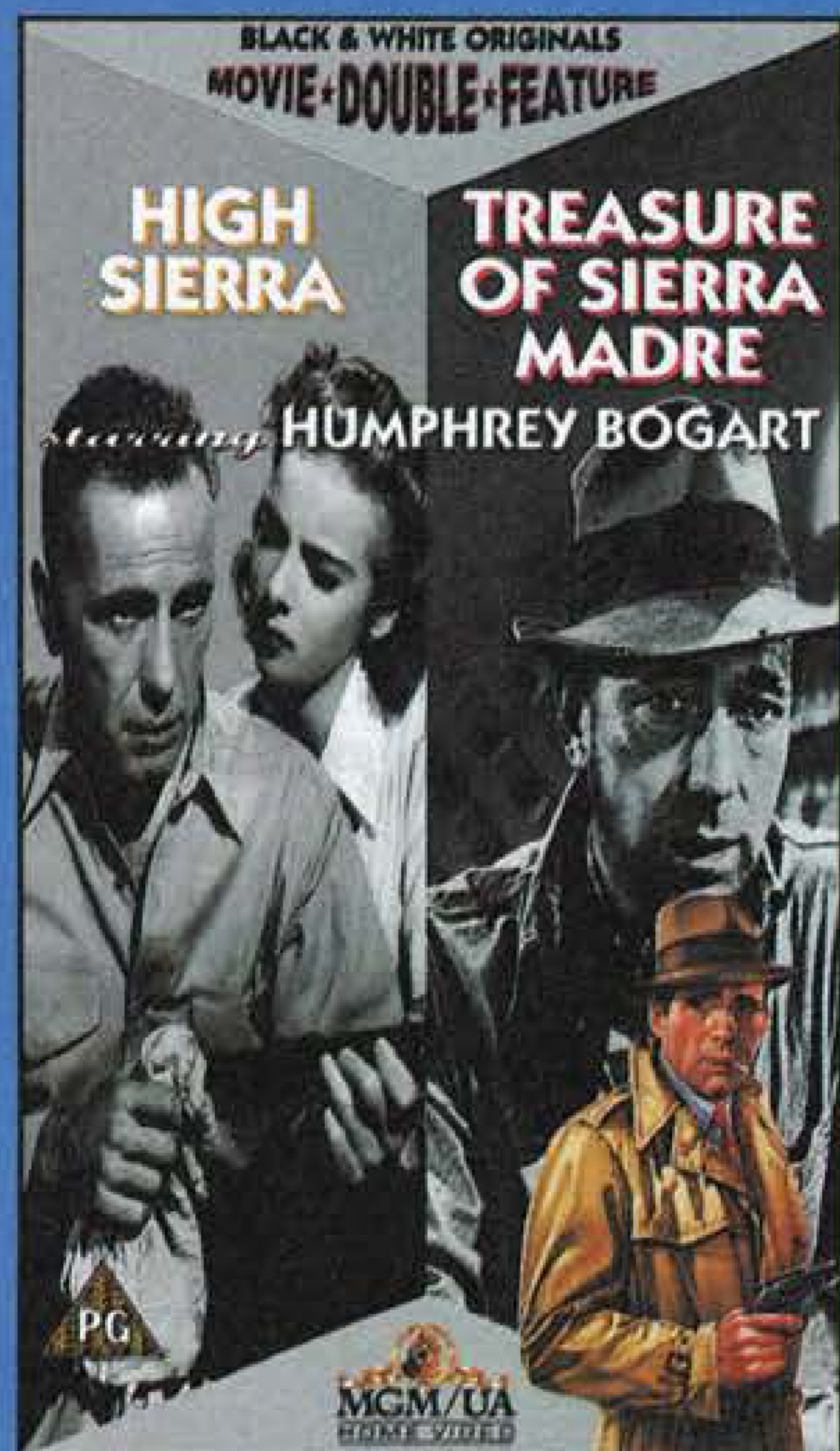
Most of these products will be aimed primarily at the home entertainment market and will be designed mainly for individual (or two- or three-player) use – if only because to provide a similar degree of interactivity for even the smallest cinema audience is problematic. An interactive movie called *Voyeur*, developed by Philips Interactive, is one of the first forays into this area. Featuring on-screen live-action actors whom the viewer can monitor via Quick-time movies and multi-media windows, *Voyeur* offers a interesting (if rather empty) high-tech pastiche of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* that would have resonated better without its sleazier peep-show elements. More ambitious, though equally banal in content, is Interfilm's romantic thriller *I'm Your Man*, an interactive movie with eight parallel storylines which viewers can vote to pursue by pressing a Nintendo-like pistol grip attached to their cinema seat.

Despite coming up with an intriguing template of how an interactive movie might operate, *I'm Your Man*, raises more questions than it answers. How will viewers feel at being out-voted on the way the story goes? Will they lose interest if the film moves out of their control? And what about the impact on budgets? Will a film with eight storylines weigh in at eight times the price? Or if it does cost the same as a conventional movie, is it doomed to look only one-eighth as good?

Even if the jury is still out on the idea of interactive cinema, two recent events suggest that the film/game multi-media hybrid is likely to have a significant place in the Dream Factory of the future. The first is the news that writer-producer-director James Cameron has joined forces with IBM and *Jurassic Park* special-effects wiz Stan Winston to start a new company, Digital Domain, which will help to realise forthcoming Cameron features and at the same time explore ways whereby these can be expanded into multi-media forms. The second is the announcement that Spielberg, in conjunction with buddy George Lucas, is starting development on his first multi-media project, a CD ROM-based fantasy/adventure called *The Dig*. The great ringmaster of the American imagination may currently be enjoying watching his dinosaur creations run free, but he's clearly also busy preparing the ground for the next possible link in the evolutionary chain.

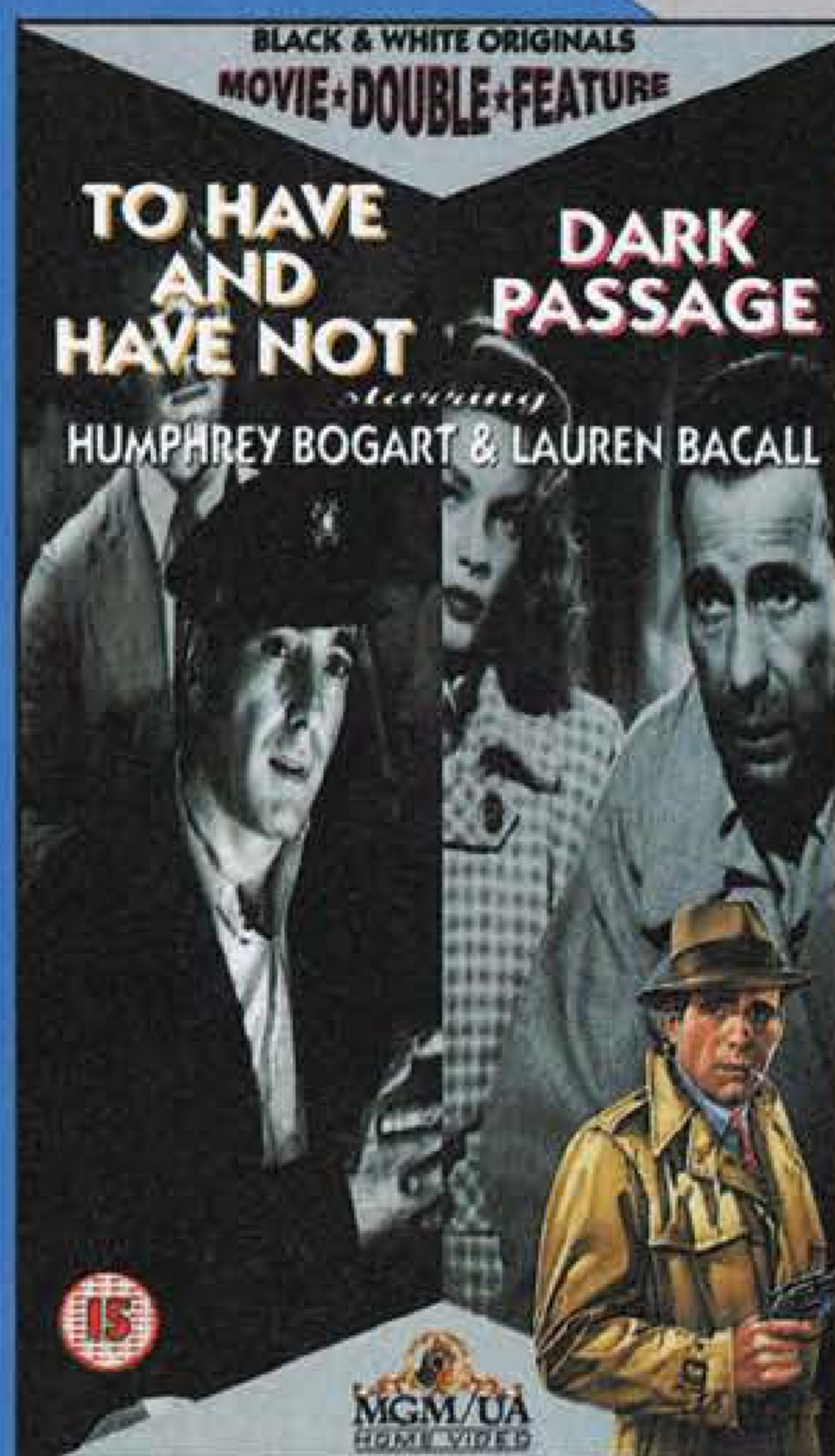
"Arguably the best retail package of the year to date."

EMPIRE (TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT/DARK PASSAGE)



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Bonnie Scotland/Laurel & Hardy's
Laughing 20's

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STORES

Gong Li is an acclaimed actress, mobbed on the streets at home. How is her success mirrored in the lives and the films of her predecessors? By Berenice Reynaud



GONG LI

AND THE GLAMOUR OF THE CHINESE STAR

Pain and sensuality: Gong Li as the trapped wife in 'Raise the Red Lantern', above; and as the golden-hearted prostitute in 'Farewell to My Concubine', right



● A bride is carried in a traditional red palanquin along the road that leads to the winery. Aware that the groom is a leper, her young porters jolt and make fun of her. The procession is stopped by a highwayman, who robs the porters and musicians and lifts the red veil that covers the bride. The unexpected, lustful smile of the heroine illuminates the screen, revealing, in her perfect face, two irregularly shaped front teeth like large pearls encased in velvet. With this smile, 22-year-old Gong Li became an overnight star.

To cast the female lead of his 1987 feature *Red Sorghum*, director-Pygmalion Zhang Yimou interviewed scores of theatre students before he met Gong Li. He then spent three days spying on her while Gong, unaware, performed for her teacher. Their subsequent romance delighted the readers of the scandal sheets from Beijing to Hong Kong, as Zhang's wife noisily refused him a divorce. For years Zhang and Gong lived miles apart, in their respective work units, together only when they made movies.

Zhang obsessively cast Gong in a series of melodramatic situations (*Ju Dou*, 1990; *Raise the Red Lantern*, 1991) in which his camera lingered on her beauty and the exquisite mixture of

pain and sensuality she expressed. The international success of the three films turned Gong into a celebrity abroad as well. Meanwhile, she had her teeth fixed to conform to the standard Hollywood smile and posed for pin-up calendars. The first Chinese star to appear in *Elle*, she is mobbed in the streets at home – Chinese spectators want to *touch* their idols – and wooed by Hong Kong producers (she has just finished her twelfth feature – a comedy, *Tang Bo Fu*, directed by Lee Lik-chee – on the island). Her fourth film with Zhang Yimou, *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992), in which she plays an unglamorous, heavily pregnant, touchingly obstinate heroine, displays another facet of her talent. Happy in love as in her work – Zhang is now divorced – the woman whose face “makes men weak and women longing” (Scarlet Cheng, *South China Morning Post*) has become hot property indeed.

Mainland China has no shortage of talented actresses, but in spite of the pressing adoration of Chinese audiences few can be considered ‘stars’ in the western sense of the term. In the west, stardom is associated with glamour, fashionable clothes, exotic locations and scandalous love affairs that daily life in Communist China hardly permits. After 1949 film actors,

paid a proletarian salary by their work units, were cast as ‘cultural workers’ involved in the enormous task of turning cinema into a popular art. From this point of view, they were extremely successful: in 1949, 90 per cent of Chinese had never seen a film, whereas by 1982 cinema attendances were as high as 25.5 billion. To enable them to portray working-class or peasant heroines, actresses would work in the fields or factories for months at a time. This in turn contributed to their popularity: identification worked particularly well for audiences able to recognise themselves in the drawn-from-life characters. Stars toured villages and factories for the opening of their films, where they would be surrounded by large crowds who would hail them familiarly by the name of the character they portrayed.

Famous actresses of the period are remembered not for their idiosyncrasies, tragic life stories or extravagant lifestyles, but for their appearance in some masterpiece of Chinese revolutionary cinema: Tian Hua in Shui's *White-Haired Girl* (shot in 1950 and attracting audiences of more than 150 million), Qin Yi in Xie Jin's *Girl Basketball Player No. 5* (1957) and Lin Yang's *Red Seed* (1958), Xie Fang in Xie Tieli's



Early Spring in February (1963) and Xie Jin's *Two Stage Sisters* (1965). Both *Early Spring* and *Stage Sisters* were violently attacked during the Cultural Revolution, a period when it was no easy thing to be a movie star. Mrs Mao, a former second-rate actress, was especially virulent in prosecuting talented performers as "rightist" or "decadent". A tragic case was that of the exquisite Zin Fengxia, an opera star since the age of 14, whose 1951 wedding to film director and playwright Wu Zuguang made the front pages. In 1963 Zin made her film debut as star of *The Rose of Wenke*, a romantic musical written by her husband. In 1966, she was sent to a re-education camp; her health failed and she became paralysed. Wu used her memoirs in one of his plays, *Up Hill and Down Dale*, brought to the screen by Cen Fan in 1984. The plot – abject poverty, impossible love, forced marriage – would fit in a Chinese melodrama of the 30s.

Even today, Mainland Chinese actresses are unable to reach what we would recognise as stardom except through co-productions. Gong Li would have remained a salaried performer if Japanese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong money hadn't been poured into her career. And as a result of the open door policy instated

in 1978, a few other actresses have also managed to reach that goal.

Liu Xiaoqing, who made her debut in Wang Yan's *About Xu Mao and His Daughters* (1981), and went on to star in Ling Zifeng's *Rickshaw Boy* (1982) and *Chun Tao* (1987), and Xie Jin's *Hibiscus Town* (1988), is a character larger than life. Still attracting attention for her romance and partnership with the great actor Jiang Weng (he is slightly younger than her, still a taboo in Chinese society), Liu is now in a position to call the shots. When a Hong Kong production company asked her to star in a costume drama, she imposed Fifth Generation director Tian Zhuangzhuang. For the film, *Li Lianying, the Imperial Eunuch* (1991, Silver Bear in Berlin), she aged herself to give a moving performance as the Empress Dowager Cixi – the stuff legends are made of. Less flamboyant, Siqin Gaowa, star of Xie Fei's *Women from the Lake of Scented Souls* (1993, Golden Bear in Berlin) has gradually emerged as one of the strongest actresses of her generation. Yet her hard-won achievements seem possible only through a schizophrenic life: she left behind the children of a previous marriage for golden seclusion in Switzerland.

The combination of glamour and tragedy is

not a new concept for the female star of Chinese cinema. In March 1935, in Shanghai, Ruan Lingyu, a star of the silent era nicknamed "the Chinese Garbo", committed suicide at the age of 25. The procession following her funeral was five kilometres long, and half a century later she is still remembered with nostalgia. Like Gong Li, Ruan became famous for her portrayal of suffering women. In her most famous film, Wu Yonggang's *The Goddess* (1934), she plays a tough, chain-smoking streetwalker forced into the job to earn money to raise her child. In Sun Yu's *The Little Toy* (1933) she is a tough, tender and patriotic 'mother courage' who sacrifices her love interest to her family and becomes mad after losing her children. In Cai Chusheng's *New Women* (1935) she plays a writer who refuses to prostitute herself to pay her daughter's hospital bill. The child dies and, a victim of malicious gossip, the heroine kills herself. The film was inspired by the recent suicide of another female star, Ai Xia, and was Ruan's last screen appearance.

Unlike Gong, who knows how to project a mask of pain while remaining an uncomplicated modern middle-class girl, Ruan – who started her film career as a teenager to avoid ►

◀ the abuse and humiliation of her situation as a maidservant's daughter – did not 'act', but really experienced the feelings she projected on screen. Hence the unaffected emotional charge, poignancy and feistiness of her performance – unable to separate acting from reality, she was literally consumed by the tragic dimension of her roles.

As the capital of Chinese cinema, Shanghai produced a series of unequalled masterpieces until the Japanese occupation in 1938. The emergence of strong female stars was a result of the fierce competition between the 50-odd production companies. Under contract for a monthly salary, stars became the studios' trademarks. This in itself was a small revolution: for the first Chinese film, *An Unhappy Couple*, directed in 1913 by Zhang Schichuan for an American company, Asia Motion pictures, male theatre actors were cast in the female parts. When Zhang created his own company, he gave the leading role of *The Orphan Saves His Grandfather* (1920) to a 'westernised' secretary, who became the first Chinese female movie star: Wang Hanlun. Zhang also 'discovered' Ruan Lingyu, but his main star was Hu Die, who graced such classics as Zhang's *Tenderness Market* (1933) and *A Bible for a Woman* (1934). Another great star was the vivacious Li Lili, who played Ruan's daughter in *The Little Toy* and a resilient entertainer in Sun Yu's *Blood on the Volcano* (1932). Stars posed for fan magazines and even for commercial advertisements. Chinese critics claim that unlike their modern counterparts, Shanghai actresses of the 30s have *xiuyang* – a subtle mixture of education, refinement and elegance.

With the Japanese invasion, the war, and the Communist revolution, many film professionals emigrated to Hong Kong. There a new genre was soon born, the Mandarin musical, that was to flourish until the 60s and to generate a new kind of female star: the songstress. Divided between 'sweet' and 'sour' beauties (a pic-

turesque metaphor for the good girl/bad girl dichotomy), songstresses carried the traditional burden of female suffering. Thought to be no better than prostitutes, they were often forced into the profession by unhappy circumstances – poor, raped, pregnant, exploited by cads, forbidden to marry for love.

The sweetest was Zhou Xuan, a singer nicknamed "the Golden Throat" who had a huge following and starred in many first-rate melodramas in Shanghai, including Yuan Muzhi's masterpiece *Street Angel* (1937). After the war she emigrated to Hong Kong, where her real-life misfortunes inspired the plots of such musicals as *An All-Consuming Love* (1947) and *Orioles Banished from the Flowers* (1949). Bai Guang, the sexiest and sultriest of the Hong Kong 'sour' beauties, became famous as one of the most wicked *femmes fatales* in Chinese cinema. In *Blood-Stained Begonia* (1949), "she does every despicable thing imaginable except murder. She spends lavishly, forces her husband into a life of crime, abandons her daughter, seduces men, pimps, hits her 'girls', she is frequently shot in langorous poses, all the while dangling a steamy cigarette from her scarlet lips." (Sam Ho, Hong Kong Film Festival.) Another famous 'sour' beauty, Li Lihua, played a series of glamorous singing bitches of the 40s and 50s.

Beyond the sweet/sour dichotomy, the Mandarin musical produced in Hong Kong witnessed the blossoming of a certain form of modernity. As in Hollywood, pop music and dancing embodied the values of youth, as opposed to high art and traditional morality. Even as a 'fallen woman', the songstress was on the side of progress. The stage was set for the emergence of a woman who could sing and dance without having to suffer for it. That happened in *The Mambo Girl* (1957), hailed as "the best Mandarin musical" and tailor-made for its star, the spirited Ge Lan (aka Grace Chang). Definitely middle class – with the obligatory plot twist revealing that she was, after all,

adopted – the heroine wards off men and the trouble they bring by teaching them to dance the mambo and the cha-cha.

With her dynamism, *joie de vivre* and casual sweaters, Ge's mambo girl echoed European and American youth culture of the late 50s. Even when playing a tragic heroine, she displayed an endearing humour and winning sense of parody, as in the exhilarating *noir* musical *Wild, Wild Rose* (1960), in which she crones about "Meeen" and "Looove" to the most famous tune of Bizet's *Carmen*.

Ge Lan retired in the mid-60s, at the peak of her career. She left a double legacy. Melodrama, to survive, had to turn to comedy, so most female stars who followed combined acting and singing. The most successful currently is Hong Kong pop goddess Anita Mui. A soft-hearted courtesan-turned-ghost in Stanley Kwan's nostalgic melodrama *Rouge* (1988) and a gun-totting moll in Tsui Hark's flamboyant thriller *To Live and Die in Saigon* (aka *A Better Tomorrow III*, 1989), she is also an extremely popular singer. Most starlets are 'discovered' through beauty contests, then jump to television and talk shows. Catering to a young audience, and still influenced by the classical canons of Chinese beauty, Hong Kong cinema is even more obsessed with fresh, pretty faces than Hollywood. Yet some starlets become brilliant artists, as is the case with Sylvia Chang.

Born in Taiwan, living in Hong Kong and a mega-star in both countries, Chang appeared in more than 80 movies and worked with the greatest Chinese directors, from kung fu master King Hu in *Legend of the Mountains* (1978) to New Wave wonderkid Tsui Hark in *Shanghai Blues* (1984). Her excellent comic timing and smooth, adolescent beauty made her a queen of the Hong Kong action comedy, but her real love has been auteur films. Although "almost retired" – despite a physique that would tempt many western performers to carry on playing teenagers – Chang recently made a stunning

FACES OF CHINA



Li Lili in Sun Yu's 'Blood on the Volcano' (1932), above; the tragic Ruan Lingyu, photographed in 1935, right; Ruan Lingyu in Cai Chusheng's 'New Women', 1935, opposite left



appearance in Lawrence Ah Mon's *Queen of Temple Street* (1990), shot in the red-light district of Kowloon. Without make-up or fashionable clothes, she plays a working-class madam, a woman who has loved and suffered and is not afraid to fight. Also in Hong Kong, Chang produced *The Secret* (1979), Ann Hui's first feature. In Taiwan she gave Edward Yang his first directing chance, thus contributing, with *That Day on the Beach* (1983, one of her most complex roles) to the launching of a New Wave. She has also tried her hand at directing: the sophisticated portrait of two women in *Passion* (1986) and a comedy starring Gong Li, *Mary of Beijing* (1992).

Many other actresses have turned to producing, the most famous being former kung fu goddess Hsu Feng, discovered by King Hu in her native Taiwan at the age of 15. Admired for her cool, glamorous presence and breathtaking acrobatic skills, she was honoured last autumn by a retrospective at New York's Lincoln Centre. The star of *Dragon Gate Inn* (1966), *A Touch of Zen* (1969) and many more, she married a real-estate millionaire and retired – only to start a production company whose latest film is Palme d'Or winner *Farewell to My Concubine* by Fifth Generation director Chen Kaige, starring none other than Gong Li. In *Farewell* Gong starts as the conventional golden-hearted yet bitchy prostitute who gets her man, then ages to become a wife driven to suicide by her husband's betrayal during the Cultural Revolution.

When she works in Mainland China, Gong simply receives a salary from her studio. In Hong Kong it is another matter, yet while she is among the top actresses there, Gong is not the best paid – that honour falls to Brigitte Lin, who seduced audiences as a 20s heroine donning men's clothes in Tsui Hark's *Peking Opera Blues* (1986). Cast in many action films because of her acrobatic talents and great beauty, she resumed cross-dressing when Tsui gave her the part of Master Asia, the villain who castrated himself to acquire supernatural kung fu pow-

If Gong Li learns to speak English, Hollywood might open its doors to her – as it did to another Mainland Chinese actress, Joan Chen

ers, in *Swordsman II* (1992). Half man, half woman, Lin flirts with the hero underwater and in her bedchamber but fights him in the air and on the battlefield – thus suggesting a sexual ambiguity rare in Chinese cinema.

Gong Li – sometimes rumoured to be difficult with journalists – is not the most popular star in Hong Kong either. That would probably be Maggie Cheung – also the first Chinese actress to have won a major international award (Silver Bear in Berlin in 1992 for her portrayal of Ruan Lingyu in Stanley Kwan's *Actress*, aka *Centre Stage*, 1991). Yet in spite of Cheung's magnetism, beauty, winning personality and immense talent, her iconic value pales in front of Gong's. Is it because western audiences are Orientalist at heart, and Cheung is too much of a modern Hong Kong girl to make them dream? For what is remarkable about Gong is not so much her poise and versatility, but her ability to signify Chineseness, femininity and mystery outside her own culture.

There wouldn't be female stars without 'women's directors'. Zhang Yimou might be Sternberg to Gong Li, but Stanley Kwan is the Cukor of Hong Kong. Not only has he given Anita Mui, Sylvia Chang, Maggie Cheung and Siqin Gaowa some of their most fulfilling roles, but he has explored the seductions of female stardom by directing a complex video portrait of Siqin Gaowa and by paying homage to Ruan Lingyu in *Actress*, a film as alluring, fragile and mysterious as its subject.

"I wasn't interested in Ruan's love affairs, but in recovering the golden age of Chinese cinema", Kwan claims. The film dwells lightly on

the reasons that might have drawn Ruan to suicide – her tormented private life, the malicious gossip campaign against her – and leaves intact the myth of glamorised female suffering. If Ruan's memory continues to haunt Chinese viewers, it is both as a symbol of the lost splendour of Shanghai and as a victim of history – of the feudal oppression of women and the poor, Confucian morality and the Japanese invasion. Women suffer a lot in Chinese fiction, especially in troubled times when their pain becomes a metaphor for the country's fate. But Gong Li is fond of asserting that "women's condition has changed in China", placing a distance between herself and the feudal heroines she so often plays – not unlike Madonna, who wants a career à la Marilyn, but without the barbiturates.

Gong symbolises the film-making of the Fifth Generation – and her collaboration with Zhang Yimou articulates a cultural dilemma. Gong is the same age as the students of the Democracy Movement that ended in the Tiananmen Square massacre; robbed of his adolescence by the Cultural Revolution, Zhang Yimou can vicariously relive his youth through his star/lover. The underlying nostalgia that can be read in the way Gong is framed, marketed and consumed is that of irretrievable loss. This alchemy, whereby Gong comes to represent what she is not, involves a double silence, foreclosing both the Cultural Revolution (his loss) and the 4 June massacre (her loss, or at least that of her generation).

If Gong Li learns to speak English, Hollywood might open its doors to her – as it did to another Mainland actress, Joan Chen. On the other hand, Ruan Lingyu and the screen goddesses of the 30s, who remain eternally silent, continue to make us dream. What makes a legend most? Good looks, gumption or *xiuyang*? I'll bet on *xiuyang* any day.

Artificial Eye will release *Farewell to My Concubine* on 7 January 1994



Hu Die, Zhang Schichuan's great star, left; Zhou Xuan, the "Golden Throat" of pre-war Shanghai melodrama, above

From New York, Amy Taubin reports on the cinematic ambition and commercial fate of two smart new African-American movies: 'Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.' and 'Menace II Society'

GIRL N THE HOOD

● About two years ago the *New York Times Magazine*, in its role as cultural watchdog for the middlebrow, ran a story about "the new African-American filmmaking". Pictured on the cover were about half a dozen directors, all of them male. Although the photograph outraged a lot of people – all of them, as far as I know, female – it was hard to think of a single African-American woman director who had been unfairly omitted. Unless it was Julie Dash, whose *Daughters of the Dust* had attracted both critical and audience acclaim.

Daughters, because it was both an art film and a women's picture, was just a shade marginal for whatever it was the *Times* was after. More marginal, say, than Charles Burnett's *To Sleep With Anger*, which could satisfy a 'serious' audience of both sexes – meaning its dramatic conflict revolved around two men. Obviously the gender imbalance (Dash did receive a passing mention in the article) was a result not of a lack of talent, skill or drive on the part of African-American women, but rather of the structure of the film industry and its perceptions about film audiences. But try getting anyone who profits from the status quo to admit to that.

Despite denials that anything was wrong with the *Times*' picture, there were signs from indie producers and distributors (and even from the studios) that the hunt was on for an African-American woman director who could deliver the goods to a popular film audience – the way a few women rap artists sell records (though no female rapper except the pop cross-over Salt n Pepa has yet gone gold).

The first, and thus far the only woman to complete a film that even vaguely fills the bill, is Leslie Harris. Harris' ultra-low-budget *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.*, a cautionary comedy about teenage pregnancy, opened in the US in February. Miramax, its distributor, is expert at getting free publicity and *I.R.T.* had an even better talk-show hook than *The Crying Game*. There's an epidemic of "babies having babies" in the US: reports of newborns found dead or barely alive in the garbage are featured regularly on local New York television news. In most of these stories, the mother is written off as a drug addict or mentally impaired. Harris wanted to show that even the best and brightest kids can be pushed over the edge by an unwanted pregnancy.

Harris worked hard to get the audience she wanted – "teenagers, mothers and feminists". The week the film opened she was appearing on television (national and local, broadcast and cable) a couple of times a day. *I.R.T.* got mixed

reviews: the *Times* was supportive, the *Voice* enthusiastic, the *New Yorker* vitriolic. The film played in about 50 theatres, hovered near the bottom of the *Variety* box-office chart, and disappeared after about a month.

It had been three years in production. Harris, who had made a couple of short films in college and then worked for some New York advertising agencies, started to look for the money to make *I.R.T.* in 1990. "I hadn't seen realistic images of myself in film," she explained. "There have been films made from an African-American male perspective about African-American males coming of age. The women in those films are just hanging off some guy's arm. I wanted to make a film from the perspective of a 17-year-old girl at the crossroads. I'd see these teenage women on the subway and I'd want to follow them home and show them as they are – with all their energy and all their faults and flaws." The film, which cost less than \$500,000, was shot with arts council grants and private money from relatives and friends. Shooting took 17 days; editing about a year. Miramax saw the rough-cut and put up the money for post-production.

"The film Hollywood would never make" reads the title over the final fade. You'd better believe it. Thoroughly subversive in form and content, *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* is intentionally didactic – like a rap video crossed with Godard. Its adolescent hero, Chantel, tells her story in the first person with frequent direct-to-camera asides.

"Tomorrow you might be reading about this in the paper, or you might even see it on television. You might shake your head and say 'that girl must have been bummed out on crack...' But I'm going to tell you the real deal," she confides over the opening image. Although we don't know it, the first thing we see – a night-time exterior with a young, worried black man carrying a plastic garbage bag – is a flash forward to



Cautionary tale: the Hughes brothers' 'Menace II Society'

the end of the narrative. Chantel tells her story in a mix of past and present, pointing out things as they happen but also explaining her actions from a position of hindsight. It's this first-person narration – the ironic view Chantel has of herself and events – that distinguishes *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* from American after-school television specials or from British social-realist drama of the early 60s.

Smart, sassy and ambitious, Chantel lives in a crowded Brooklyn apartment "in the projects", with her mother, father and two brothers. A working-class family, they're barely getting by on two full-time salaries. Chantel wants out; she's got her route mapped – she's going to become a doctor. A straight-A student, she knows she's "not just any girl from the neighbourhood." But just because she reads biology books doesn't mean she's all that clear about birth control. Or that in a compelling moment, she won't be persuaded to do without. Chantel gets pregnant, a situation so disruptive to the plans she's made for her life that she can't deal with it. She goes into deep denial.

Harris shows us how Chantel's reaction to her pregnancy, which might seem implausible if outlined on paper, is, if anything, overdetermined, both psychologically and socially. Chantel knows what her choices are: to have an abortion; to have the baby and give it up for adoption; or to have it and keep it. In fact, she insists that the choice is hers alone to make. When her boyfriend gives her \$500 for an abortion, she rebels against his "pressure", spending the money on a clothes buying spree.

Because all the options are terrifying, she refuses to do anything. Instead, she tells her friends that she's OK, takes elaborate measures to disguise her thickening body and acts as if she hasn't a care in the world. Sometimes she even convinces herself. (Be warned: what follows discloses the ending; if you prefer not to know what happens, this is the place to turn the page.)

While visiting her boyfriend, Chantel goes into premature labour. The scene is physiologically so inaccurate that it nearly tips the film into farce. Emotionally, however, it's right on the mark, a rollercoaster ride into hysteria. Harris manages to convince us that childbirth, especially when no one knows what they're doing, is painful and frightening enough to cause a derangement of the senses. In a state of what's sometimes called temporary insanity, Chantel tells her boyfriend to throw the baby she still refuses to believe she's carried into the garbage.

It's the film's most transgressive move – to



Coming into the frame: 'Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.', the story of a 17-year-old girl and a cross between Godard and rap video

suggest that the fabled maternal instinct is not infallible, that denial as desperate as Chantel's does not evaporate with the infant's first cry. Since *I.R.T.* is a comedy, however, it resolves in its hero's favour – in the nick of time, Chantel manages to do the right thing.

I.R.T. is engaging and moving only if you're thoroughly on Chantel's side. Harris could have cast an actor who looked young but was professionally adept at smoothing the edges of 17-year-old behaviour – making the voice less sing-song, the laughter less abrasive, the defences less impenetrable, the need for attention less irritating. Instead, she chose the relatively inexperienced but quite remarkable Ariyan Johnson. Johnson refuses to make Chantel merely likeable or to shy away from her contradictions. She can play mixed emotions; she's quick witted; her exuberance is irresistible. While the cinematography is merely serviceable, Harris' editing is lively, as surprising in its juxtapositions as her script. She cuts the film to Chantel's hip-hop rhythms (female rappers Nikki D. and Cee Asia back her on the track).

I have a couple of political differences with the film. There's a moment of knee-jerk anti-semitism that panders to the worst in the current relationship between African-Americans and Jews in New York City. And beneath Chantel's pro-choice insistence is an anti-abortion bias that Harris never confronts. The impli-

cation of *I.R.T.*'s decidedly 'up' ending is that Chantel's inability to make a choice was not such a bad thing, that although she winds up in community college rather than in medical school, it's only by having the baby that she "got her shit together".

These quarrels aside, *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* is as intelligent, moving and engaging as its hero. As the first African-American pop film about female subjectivity, it deserves, at the very least, the attention afforded Spike Lee's 1986 groundbreaking – though thoroughly misogynist – *She's Gotta Have It*. Instead (with few exceptions) it was dismissed by critics (almost all of them white and male) as "inconsistent", "didactic" and "unbelievable". Needless to say, these same critics would have had no problem with Harris' mix of realism and theatricality had it come from Godard or even Woody Allen. The reaction to Chantel as a character suggests the kind of unconscious racism that refuses to acknowledge that a girl from the hood could be intelligent, ambitious and vulnerable, let alone intelligent, ambitious, vulnerable, and, though painfully confused, capable of saving her life.

In terms of audience appeal, *I.R.T.* falls between the cracks. It is too much of a teen film to attract the black middle-class female audience identified by Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*. On the other hand, it lacks the coding of the black teen genre: its violence has nothing to do with

guns; its rap track is anything but hard; and, most problematic of all, it puts women, not men, front and centre.

In other words, it is not *Menace II Society*. The first feature by the 21-year-old Hughes twins, Allen and Albert, *Menace* grossed \$20 million in the first five weeks of its US release (its soundtrack album is headed for platinum) and ignited a hotter critical debate than *Malcolm X*. Another cautionary tale, *Menace* is about young black men *not* coming of age in southern California ghettos, about dead-ending in Watts and South Central. As legend already has it, the Hughes brothers, who persuaded their mother to buy them a video camera when they were 12 and who had directed over a dozen music videos for major rap groups before they were 20, were outraged by the Hollywood-style sentimentality of John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*. They convinced New Line Cinema to give them \$2.5 million to report what really goes down in the ghetto – the self-destructive cycle of black on black violence, the pathological internalisation of the values of a racist society so that black men grow up believing their lives are worth nothing. New Line had the commercial smarts to realise that the extremity of the violence the Hughes brothers promised would be enough to outweigh the film's feel-bad ending.

Unlike *New Jack City*, *Menace II Society* is not merely a 90s-style blaxploitation picture. As film-making, it is impassioned, ambitious and sophisticated. The Hughes brothers are enthralled with the gangster genre – with *Mean Streets* and *Scarface* (De Palma rather than Hawks). Thanks to Lisa Rinzler's cinematography, which combines hand-held *vérité* with lushly expressionist lighting (à la *Mean Streets*), and the directors' preference for mix-and-match set-pieces (as opposed to seamless realism), *Menace* has enormous visual presence.

Menace II Society lays out the psychological dynamics of ghetto masculinity: where not to be a 'menace' is to admit that one is powerless, a victim, in other words feminine; where it's worth dying to prove that one is not a 'faggot' or a 'bitch'.

That the Hughes brothers fetishise the representation of the macho violence they critique is merely to place them in a worldwide tradition of great film-making. That the violence they fetishise has such an immediate and tragic referent in the world makes *Menace II Society* very painful to watch.

'*Girl on the I.R.T.*' opens on 30 July and is reviewed on page 45; '*Menace II Society*' opens later this year

Chubby Brown, a vulgar, offensive and immensely popular northern comic, is making his first film. Is he part of the alternative version of British cinema? By Geoffrey McNab

INSIDE THE BELLY

Coming your way this autumn, as long as you don't have the misfortune to live in the backwaters of London or the further reaches of the Home Counties, is the latest in a long, if faltering, line of British films inspired by Variety acts; the kind of movies which in the 30s and 40s sprang out of unfashionable studios like Teddington and Twickenham, starred figures like Max Miller, Lupino Lane and Will Fyffe, and managed to get their money back without making the slightest impression on the West End or the film critics. *UFO* (which apparently stands for U F*** Off) has a budget of £1.5 million. By British standards, this is a whacking sum, probably enough to pay for every picture Derek Jarman has ever made, and a sure testament to the pulling power of its star, Roy Chubby Brown. Shot at Blackpool (in season) and at Pinewood Studios, it is due for a 50-print release next October, opening in either Manchester or Birmingham and then filtering slowly down south. Its producer, Simon Wright, envisages two or three prints may eventually reach London, but acknowledges "the worry is that it will be rejected as the most appalling, sexist, northern film which you shouldn't see."

Not that he is too concerned by how the capital city reacts; the picture's box-office fate will be determined elsewhere. Wright's primary preoccupation is to ensure that *UFO* is properly launched: "We do sincerely hope that it will be quite a major film. We do want to make a big thing out of it because of the culture behind it. This is a working-class film for working-class people, and we should treat it very seriously."

In taking to the screen, Chubby Brown follows less in the great tradition of Powell & Pressburger and David Lean than in an uncharted, gloriously vulgar one which stretches all the way from Mancunian comedies to *Carry On*, from Gainsborough melodrama and Hammer horror to Robin Askwith and Mary Millington, a tradition where making money was always rather more of a priority than being praised by Dilys Powell.

It's not hard to see why Polygram was so keen to cash in on his stage success. He is an energetic, highly visual performer, interspersing his scatological monologues with songs, eccentric jigs and dramatic lighting changes. His live shows attracted over half a million spectators last year. His two videos, *Inside the Helmet* and *The Helmet Rides Again* – tawdry, cheap-skate affairs shot on budgets of around £10,000 and with the production values of an up-market home movie – sold 250,000 copies each, out-performing *The Silence of the Lambs* and Disney's *Peter Pan* and netting £8 million. Somehow or other, he manages to reach a family audience. (In the still chauvinistic world of Variety, only men get to tell the dirty jokes. There wouldn't appear to be much in Chubby's cloacal, laddish brand of humour to attract women, but the videos go to great efforts to depict the typical Chubby audience as made up of mothers and daughters, fathers and sons.)

What makes the scale of his success all the more surprising is that it was achieved without the help of television. In a perverse way, Chubby was the beneficiary of the shake-up in

British small-screen comedy during the 80s, when Ben Elton and the alternative comedians helped to shunt their racist, sexist brethren off the airwaves, and when, as Simon Wright puts it, "a whole host of people like Jimmy Jones, Manning and everybody else were all classified rather in the same breath as very untrendy, northern, sick, backward individuals."

It's not entirely clear whether Chubby spurned television or whether it turned its back on him. Whatever the case, he has avoided the medium, and holds it in almost psychotically low regard. As he told one reporter, "those TV people are f***** b*****. They get hold of you, p*** around with your act, tame it down then throw you away when they are finished with you." He is probably right to be suspicious. With its emphasis on close-ups and talking heads, television would manacle a performer like Chubby, who uses his whole body in his comedy and loves to prance around the stage. What is more, without his arsenal of expletives and obscenities, "the rudest, crudest, filthiest comic in the world" would be but a feeble caricature of himself. Now, like Eddie Izzard, another performer who has chosen to by-pass television, he is virtually unknown in some parts of the country while attracting massive audiences in others. By staying off the box, not only has he ensured his live act remains fresh, but he has given himself a chance to follow in George Formby's footsteps from Blackpool to the big screen.

For all his surface similarities to Formby, Chubby's real spiritual forefather is arguably that toothless, geriatric gargoyle from Wigan, Frank Randle, the "bad boy of showbusiness", as he was called, a comedian who managed to offend everybody from the Lord Chamberlain to Diana Dors. In his time, Randle starred in ten pictures, most of them produced by the Mancunian Film Corporation, the tiny, Manchester-based outfit which also gave Formby's screen career a kick start. According to film historian John Montgomery, "by the end of 1943, Frank Randle was one of the biggest attractions working in English studios. In many towns in Britain, particularly in the North, his pictures took even more money than those of Errol Flynn, Marlene Dietrich and Robert Taylor." It is symptomatic of the north/south divide, of cultural elitism and metropolitan bias, that though audiences were reputed to tear doors off their hinges in their impatience to get into a new Randle film, only one or two of these northern comedies survive: they had no market south of Birmingham and were hence deemed unworthy of preservation.

Since the 50s, when television and cinema combined to stifle Variety, films depicting the north of England have tended to be either grim, socio-political dramas about unemployment and the collapse of industry – pictures like Ken Loach's *Looks and Smiles* – or celebrations of northern machismo along the lines of *This Sporting Life* and *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*, where former Oxbridge critics like Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, intoxicated by John Ford Westerns, plunder the work of novelists like David Storey and Alan Stillitoe, mapping out a lawless frontier land of Britain in ►

Monstrous laughter: Chubby Brown, inheritor of the northern Variety tradition and star of the forthcoming 'UFO', opposite; Sarah Stockbridge, Vivienne Westwood's model, plays the dominatrix spaceship commander, below





◀ which angry young men instead of cowboys call the shots. In both cases, Richard Hoggart's quaint, nostalgic notion of northern working-class culture, explored at length in *Uses of Literacy*, holds sway. The north, with its brass bands and deeply rooted family values, is muscular and authentic (the two qualities going in tow), while the south, home of the media industries, is effete and synthetic.

It is hard to imagine anybody less like a strapping young Albert Finney or a surly Richard Harris than Chubby Brown. True, Chubby's live show is an intense affair, prefaced by stirring music from *The Terminator* and *Rocky*, but the figure who bumbles his way on stage is a corpulent, baby-faced man with a leering grin, wearing helmet, goggles and a multi-coloured suit (vaguely reminiscent of Max Miller's floral garb) which is half way between a harlequin's outfit and a patchwork quilt.

Chubby is relentlessly obscene. There is nothing remotely subtle, no coy *Carry On*-style nudge-nudge, wink-wink innuendo in his set. It is all frank, crude stuff, running the gamut from jokes about sex to more jokes about sex. He is the sort of figure who might have stumbled out of one of those Donald McGill cartoons famously celebrated by George Orwell: "Your first impression is of overwhelming vulgarity. This is quite apart from the ever-present obscenity, and apart also from the hideousness of the colours. They have an utter lowness of mental atmosphere which comes out not only in the nature of the jokes but, even more, in the grotesque, staring, blatant quality of the drawing." (*The Art of Donald McGill*, 1942.)

In *King Twist*, his perceptive account of the life and times of Frank Randle, Jeff Nuttall likens Britain to a human body: London and the south-east are the nation's head, while the north is the "digestive and anal tract". This dichotomy can be expressed in many different ways. Orwell, for example, saw the split in terms of a tension all Britons experienced between their "Don Quixote" side – a sort of stiff-upper-lipped, dreamy idealism which could never be sustained for long – and a baser "Sancho Panza" side, a constant urge to seek relief by taking the "worm's eye" view of life. However you describe the schism, whether you see it in regional, class, corporeal or even psychoanalytic terms, it can certainly be extended to the British film industry.

Both geographically and in terms of subject matter addressed, the British movie business is tilted heavily in favour of the south-east. From *Brief Encounter* to *Howards End*, British pictures have all too frequently been peopled by haughty Home Counties or Bloomsbury types, with a token Stanley Holloway figure on hand to depict the good-natured working man. Simon Wright deplores this state of affairs, claiming he wants to "decentralise the entire film industry." He has high hopes that *UFO* will capture what he refers to as the "Multiplex audience" – those spectators who are profoundly alienated by "patronising, soul-searching movies" but are lured to their local theatres for the latest Hollywood blockbusters. He imagines business for *UFO* will be brisk early on, will tail off after a fortnight or so, but that the film



Places and faces: the colourful Max Miller in 'Hoots, Mon!', top; the irrepressible Frank Randle in 'When You Come Home' (1947), centre; Randle and Diana Dors in 'It's A Grand Life', bottom

will continue to draw audiences for late-night Friday and Saturday screenings.

The economic logic behind the whole endeavour is compelling. Polygram realised that the live videos, lucrative though they are, can't go on selling forever. By turning Chubby into a film star, they give themselves the chance to broach new markets. Furthermore, they have the consolation that should *UFO* flop at the theatres, it will eventually come out on video, and they'll probably recoup their money anyway. (One thing is for certain – they're not financing this film because of their love of the northern music-hall tradition.)

Straining credulity

"How do we establish this loud, raucous man who is incredibly crude about his wife and generally abhorrent about sex and everything else? How do we make him sympathetic?" This was the problem that confronted Wright in his capacity as scriptwriter. He came up with an extravagant, *Barbarella*-style fantasy in which Chubby Brown's quiddities are no more monstrous than anybody else's.

The plot strains credulity well past breaking point. Chubby is plucked from the Blackpool stage, mid-performance, by 28th-century feminists who lock him up in a spaceship, whisk him away to a distant galaxy, and take him to task for his sexist beliefs. He is put through various trials, which almost cost him his life, and ends up dressed as a baby. For a final punishment, he is returned to earth as a pregnant man and told he will be made pregnant every year for 30 years. Sarah Stockbridge (like Wright, a Comic Strip Presents veteran) plays the dominatrix commander of the spaceship; Roger Lloyd Pack (Trigger from *Only Fools and Horses*) is Chubby's only ally, the hermaphrodite Clitoran; Shirley Anne Field, a stalwart of 60s British cinema, has a role as an earth mother.

Traditionally, Variety stars have struggled to make the transition from stage to screen. What Andy Medhurst has described as "the central problematic of the 1930s Variety star film – how to accommodate such performers within existing cinematic genres" still applies today. Whereas Variety is the "mecca of the individualist," films are collective. The most successful British film comedians, figures such as Gracie Fields, George Formby and Norman Wisdom, managed to subsume their personalities, to achieve what Jeffrey Richards has described as a "universal symbolic status". But in doing so, in tailoring their vehicles so they'd be popular throughout the country, they had their tics and local appeal strained out of them.

Fields ended up in Hollywood. (In *Age of the Dream Palace*, Richards charts the way her film vehicles changed from "backstreet stories", specific to the north of England, to "backstage stories", specific to nowhere.) Wisdom also went for a short time to America: he was Oscar-nominated for *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968). Unlike Fields or Formby, he was never identified with a particular region. Right from the outset, he had a universality of appeal: he was the little man, the Private Schewyck (both he and Formby were astonishingly popular in eastern Europe) and his movies nearly all fea-

tured him at loggerheads with some kind of institution, be it the army, civil service, or school. He was rarely in control of events, generally being portrayed as an innocent, if inept, victim of circumstance.

While Wisdom's blend of laughter and pathos proved successful at the box office, more idiosyncratic, aggressive performers fell by the wayside. Take Max Miller, for example. The "cheeky chappie" was lost without a live audience. Unlike gormless Formby or hapless Wisdom, he wasn't the kind of figure to bring out the maternal instinct in cinema spectators. His cockney patter, his constant smutty jokes and even his wonderfully exotic suits counted against him: he was a spiv and a smart arse, and his career suffered accordingly. The gulf between doing a spot of solo stand-up in a music hall and acting as part of a film troupe, saying somebody else's dialogue and keeping to the director's chalk marks, is highlighted in his 1939 vehicle, *Hoots, Mon!* For more than half the picture, he is behind the scenes, arguing with theatre managers, conspiring to get his arch-rival, Jessie McTavish (Florence Desmond), booted off the bill for impersonating him. Needless to say, he is relentlessly unfunny. But as soon as he has his audience, he is transformed. He leans over the stage, speaks confidentially to the gallery, whispers.

Watching these sequences, you at last get a sense of why everybody from Orwell to J. B. Priestley and John Osborne regarded Miller as a master. A typical anecdote, which isn't especially amusing and wouldn't work without the performer/audience rapport, involves him recounting a recent trip to Blackpool. He is trying to find a room in a Bed & Breakfast: "*Landlady*: I am full up. *Miller*: Surely you could squeeze me in a little back room. *Landlady*: I could, but I haven't got the time right now." On stage, cheap joke though it is, it is hilarious. By all accounts, Chubby Brown too is infinitely funnier on stage than in his videos. Simon Wright goes to great lengths to emphasise: "live and video performances are totally unrelated experiences. If you go and see him live, especially in the north, it is just the most astonishing theatrical experience."

It is always hard to guess how live humour will transfer to the screen, and vice versa. In their heyday, the Marx Brothers used to take to the road just before shooting a new picture to test out the jokes from the shooting script as live material. Frank Randle, in typically abrasive fashion, solved the stage/screen conundrum by ignoring cinematic conventions altogether. As Nuttall describes it: "the picture was static as a proscenium arch. The camera angle was eye-level throughout." The comedian paid precious little attention to the script, rehashed various of his music-hall routines, and generally sought to wreak as much havoc as possible. The Crazy Gang's solution was to lampoon the whole process of making films. In *Okay for Sound* (1937) Nervo and Knox, Flanagan and Allen, Naughton and Gold and Monsewer Eddie Gray run amok on the sound stages of a beleaguered British film studio. Other Crazy Gang plots involve the Magnificent Seven flying over Nazi lines in a fish and chip van, and

turning up in the Yukon 100 years after the Gold Rush has finished. It was as if they tacitly acknowledged that film wasn't their medium, and refused to take it seriously.

Sid Field, by contrast, provides a cautionary tale of what can happen if a Variety star pays too much respect to cinema. He ended up being more or less embalmed in the lifeless 1946 Rank extravaganza, *London Town*, a misconceived British attempt to make a musical comedy to rival the Ziegfeld Follies. Field insisted on importing an American director for the project. Wesley Ruggles, the man chosen, seemed to have just the right credentials. He'd started off life as a Keystone Cop, and then had gone on to make the saucy Mae West romp, *I'm No Angel*. But he singularly failed to put any oomph into *London Town*, which turned out as nothing more than a dreary, if lavish, showcase, with its myriad performers (Tessie O'Shea and Petula Clark among them) going through the motions as they rehearsed their various routines. The film was made with the American market in mind, but ended up such a soporific affair it failed to arouse much interest at even the British box office, and was brutally cut before it finally turned up in the US as supporting material.

Bawdy comedy

In his classic book on British comedians, *Funny Way To Be a Hero*, John Fisher bemoans the way anarchic, improvisatory comedians were all too often hampered by a "paranoically script-bound treatment" when they appeared in front of the cameras. This was something Simon Wright sought to avoid with *UFO*, but he was also wary of allowing the picture to become a gilded showcase for Chubby's stage routine. The end result promises to be the usual mish-mash. In best Brechtian style, Chubby is allowed to lay bare the device, to wink at the camera, to address the audience directly, and to take an occasional time-out from the drama to sing one of his daft songs. It is perhaps worth remembering that like Edna Everage or Les Patterson, Chubby Brown is himself an act: he is a character created by comedian Roy Vasey. It would be more or less impossible to make a naturalistic drama with him at its core.

UFO, bizarrely enough, bears more than a passing resemblance to a British comedy made 70 years ago and discussed by Andy Medhurst. In *Pimple's Inferno*, the British comedy star Pimple (Fred Evans) falls asleep while reading Dante's *Inferno*, and imagines himself transported into a threatening underworld of suffragettes, where he is doubtless upbraided by an early version of Sarah Stockbridge. A constant theme of British (male) comedy has been the masochistic fear of women. For Chubby Brown as much as for the ultimate hen-pecked husband, George Formby, jokes about sex are a furtive, illicit way of cocking a snook at some terrifying, maternal alien. Chubby's stand-up material, for all its unrelenting obscenity, is traditional end-of-the-pier stuff, relishing the battle of the sexes.

John Fisher suggests that Formby's film success was attributable to the way he broadened his comic horizons and eventually overcame the notion that the most exciting experience

awaiting a northern working-class couple after marriage "was an annual visit to the seaside." Formby's first two movies, *Boots, Boots!* (1934) and *Off the Dole* (1935), were parochial, low-budget affairs. But his tyrannical wife Beryl made him tidy up his act, take off the cloth cap, and dress like a chap, in tie and jacket. When he signed with Ealing to make his third film, *No Limits*, the script allowed him to roam further afield, albeit only as far as the Isle of Man, where he competes, in typically reckless fashion, in the TT race. Ultimately, Formby was transformed from seaside entertainer to national hero, getting to give Hitler a good wallop in *Let George Do It* (1940).

You can't get much further afield than outer space. So presumably *UFO* will seek to add a new galactic element to Chubby's repertory. Still, if the film-makers tinker too much with the tried and tested formula, they risk alienating his core followers, who like him just the way he is. One of his reasons for refusing to work on television is that his fans wouldn't be getting "the real Chubby". It remains to be seen whether a film shot largely in a London studio can do any better in delivering the authentic experience. After all, Chubby is a born-and-bred northerner. Even his stand-up routine evinces dislike of the south: "It's an exciting place, London. I mean, we've all got sewers but who thinks to put fucking trains in them."

Much British humour remains resolutely regional, an impression borne out by *Hoots, Mon!*, which for all its formal crudities effectively emphasises the great divide between north and south. Jessie McTavish, exasperated by Max Miller's attempts to push her off the bill, challenges the cockney comedian to win his spurs in her backyard. In one telling scene, Miller performs his act in a Glasgow music hall, uses all his typical badinage, sings his classic "I'm a cheeky chappie" song, but fails to elicit a single laugh. Only when he does his penance, and arranges a charity concert for kids in a hospital, do the Scots warm to him, and even then reluctantly. Neither Miller's stage act nor his films went down particularly well in the north, while Randle's work made little headway south of Birmingham. And as far as sophisticated, metropolitan cinemagoers were concerned, north and south could be conflated: both Miller and Randle were beyond the pale; representatives of a bawdy, parochial style of humour which was rarely, if ever, allowed to breach fortress West End.

There is no way of knowing if Chubby Brown's screen debut can overcome the considerable class and regional obstacles placed in its way. After *Carry On Columbus* and Cannon and Ball's half-cocked *Boys in Blue*, you can't help but suspect that the British have lost the knack of making mainstream, popular comedy capable of appealing to all the various constituencies. Still, *UFO* is at least an interesting experiment: Polygram's involvement shows British film and video industries working in tandem; the picture bucks a trend by ignoring London and upholds a British comic tradition which had seemed all but defunct. Its very title takes a preemptive dig at Chubby's many likely critics.

'UFO' will be released in November

Shining in the light, Lillian Gish represented the apotheosis of whiteness, femininity and virtue in films such as 'The Birth of a Nation' and 'Broken Blossoms'. By Richard Dyer

A WHITE STAR



● Stars are things that shine brightly in the darkness. The word 'star' has become so taken for granted as meaning anyone who's a little bit famous in a little bit of the world that we're apt to forget just how appropriate the term was for people who did seem to be aglow on stages and screens in darkened halls. And no star shone more brightly in that firmament than did Lillian Gish.

We may well mistake Lillian Gish's importance in film history. In the silent period, other women stars were bigger – Mary Pickford especially, but also Theda Bara and names still less familiar now such as Blanche Sweet, Norma Talmadge, Clara Kimball Young and Anita Stewart, all of whom often eclipsed Gish's place in the public imagination. It is partly because she was a star for so long that we now accord her such importance: she was still making it impossible for you to take your eyes off her in the 40s (*Duel in the Sun*, 1946), 50s (*The Night of the Hunter*, 1955), 60s (*The Unforgiven*, 1959), 70s (*A Wedding*, 1978) and 80s (*The Whales of August*, 1987) and she was always a wonderful interviewee who could bring early cinema to life. Our enthusiasm may also have to do with the fact that her acting seems so minimalist compared to that of many of her contemporaries, closer to a later aesthetic of screen performance where not betraying the fact that one is acting is deemed such a virtue. And it is certainly because of her association with D. W. Griffith and the heroic place in the development of film that even the most revisionist histories accord him.

Yet perhaps none of that would carry much weight if when you see her in the Griffith films or *La Bohème* (1926), *The Scarlet Letter* (1926) or *The Wind* (1928) she did not radiate the screen. She is the apotheosis of the metaphor of stardom, a light shining in the darkness.

Starlight

There is a scene in *True Heart Susie* (1919) which encapsulates the relationship between stardom and light, a relationship at once technical, aesthetic and ethical. The film tells of a country girl, Susie (Gish), who puts her true love William (Robert Harron) through college, only to have him marry a city girl, Bettina. Susie has to go to the party at which William announces his marriage; she knows that Bettina is also carrying on with a city boy, Sporty Malone. The establishing shot of the sequence has the party in full swing and Susie/Gish entering and sitting on a chair down screen right, where she remains throughout the sequence, looking at the party, at William and Bettina. The sequence cuts to other characters, to reactions to the wedding announcement, but keeps coming back to Susie/Gish, in close-up or in the original establishing set-up. This is lit from the front, with some extra fill and back light on Gish; she is more in the light.

The light is firstly an adjunct to storytelling: it emphasises Gish's narrative importance as the star and main character of the film; it enables us to see her better. The fill and back light create depth by making Gish stand out a little from the

party further back in the image, while also placing her clearly in relation to what is unfolding. Fill and back light also beautify her, creating a subtle halo effect and bringing out the fairness of her hair; the use of make-up too gives her face a seamless white glow. This beauty is in turn a moral value, the aura of her true heart. There is, in other words, a special relationship between light and Gish: she is more visible, she is aesthetically and morally superior, she looks on from a position of knowledge, of enlightenment – in short, if she is so much lit, she also appears to be the source of light.

Such treatment is the culmination of a history of light that has many strands. The association of whiteness and light – of white light – with moral values goes far back. In classical Greek art, female figures are paler than male, as befits those whose proper place is in the home, a notion taken to angelic extremes in Victorian domestic ideology and imagery. Christian art has long emphasised the radiance of the pure white bodies of Christ, the Virgin, the saints and angels. Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy stressed the intrinsic transcendent superiority of the colour white, notions that were grafted on to nineteenth-century biological accounts of racial difference. The celebration of women in painting during the same period etherealised the body, drawing upon the translucent imagery of Madonnas, angels, nymphs and sprites.

Photography brought a special quality to such imagery – as images printed on white paper, photographs always show people as part transparent, as ghost-like, a characteristic readily capitalised upon in nineteenth-century portraiture and fairy set-pieces. Some of this imagery was found in the theatre too, in the romantic ballet, the *féerie* and pantomime. Here the star metaphor really begins to take hold. With the introduction of gas lighting, the difference between the auditorium and stage was emphasised, with all light in the latter. Developments in make-up, costume (notably the tutu) and directional lighting made it possible to make the female performer the focus of light, to be suffused with light or to reflect and thus apparently emanate it. Film took all of this and intensified it; the halls could be darker and the images on the screen were always of people with light shining through them. Provided they were white people.

Film developed its own codes of lighting, with the female star as centrepiece and Lillian Gish as a supreme yet typical example. By the 20s the norm for correct lighting in Hollywood was what was known as 'North' lighting, light from the land of white people. The tendency for fair hair to look dark (too dark) in black-and-white photography was overcome by using back lighting. Three-point lighting, soft light, gauzes and focus could all be employed to create the halos and glows of feminine portraiture.

Even in contemporary cinema, if you look for it, and quite noticeably in silent cinema, there is often a change of lighting between a general shot of a scene and a close-up or two-shot within it. It is here particularly that the specialness of stardom, or of the experience of romance, is signalled. There is a scene in *Way Down East* (1920),

for instance, where Anna (Gish) comes to the Bartlett family farm; she has been wandering the country, having been abandoned by the man who married her in a false ceremony and having lost her child at birth. She enters at the back of the set, which in the establishing shot is in even, outdoor light. But when the film cuts to a close-up of her, a gauze over the camera, side lighting and an iris all create the beauty of pathos. There is cross-cutting between her and the Bartlett son (Richard Barthelmess), whom she will eventually marry. Both are gorgeous and treated to special, glamourising lighting – but he is shot against a dark background with a close black iris, leaving little light around him, whereas she is fully in the light against a light background and wearing a hat that suggests a halo. When she speaks to father Bartlett, who is suspicious of this waif, both stand in the full sunlight and wear hats of much the same size – but his casts his face in shadow, whereas her face, with some extra fill light no doubt, remains radiantly white, with the hat still a halo, not a shade.

Many lighting set-ups were developed for the depiction of the heterosexual couple, frozen to perfection in production stills (a neglected factor in the construction of film-historical memory). There is the soft haze that envelops the couple, with often a subtle fill radiating the woman's face so that the man appears to be wrapped up in her glow. Or there is the head-and-shoulders close-up, with the man darkly dressed, only his shirt collar and face white and light, and the woman lightly dressed, but even lighter around the face. He rears up out of the darkness, but she is already in the light. That light comes from behind his head, magically catching the top of his hair but falling full on her face, itself an unblemished surface of white make-up which sends the light back on to his face. Barthelmess and Gish in *Way Down East*, Harron and Gish in *True Heart Susie*, Lars Hanson and Gish in *The Scarlet Letter*: she is the angel of light who can redeem his more carnal yearning.

Lillian Gish could be considered the supreme instance of the confluence of the aesthetic-moral equation of light, virtue and femininity with Hollywood's development of glamour and spectacle. She may also be its turning point. Very soon the radiance of femininity came to be seen as a trap for men, not a source of redemption – Louise Brooks in *Pandora's Box*, Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*, Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*. Even when it wasn't that, its artifice, its materiality, its lack of spirituality have become more and more evident, taken to a post-modern apogee by the so artfully named Madonna. Lillian Gish, however, simply was a Madonna, as indeed Monte Blue observed: "She is the madonna woman, and greater praise no man can give."

Steeliness and simplicity

Gish's place in this history of light is not, of course, mere chance. The weight of association and the careful assemblage of light have to 'take' on the figure to which they are applied. One could throw all the light one wanted on any number of attractive and talented young white women and not come up with Lillian Gish. This does not mean that no one else could have held an equivalent place in the history, but that ►

Angel of light: Lars Hanson and Lillian Gish in 'The Scarlet Letter' (1926), one of the films where she seems to emanate light, redeeming the male's more carnal yearnings, opposite

◀ nonetheless there had to be qualities which could carry these light values.

Gish's face and body have characteristics that suggest both the steeliness and the simplicity of virtue, which is to say that she embodies the values of feminine white light. Because having eyes larger than one's mouth was a touchstone of female beauty, and because this was not the case with Gish, she purses her mouth, keeps it closed, not intensely (which would suggest anxiety or neurosis) but poisedly, eliminating the lasciviousness of the opened mouth and suggesting primness or purity, according to taste (people found her both). Her carriage is erect, worthy of a ballet dancer, recalling the dictum of turn-of-the-century deportment (stand up straight, shoulders back) – to me a very New England look suggesting Quaker piety, Puritan simplicity. If it didn't seem ungracious, I would compare her aesthetically to a Shaker chair.

Thus her appearance has a sinewy and unfirily quality that has its own particular historical and cultural resonances. These are carried equally by her performance style. She is thin and small, and sometimes that also means painfully frail, not least in *Broken Blossoms* (1919) as she cringes away from her abusive father or from the moment of lust that passes over the face of the Yellow Man before his own goodness reasserts itself. Yet her toughness is at least as legendary, braving the ice flows without a double in *Way Down East*, facing up to the remorseless sand blows of *The Wind*, facing down Robert



Pure power: Lillian Gish, immortalised in a studio portrait as an icon of wide-eyed innocence, goodness and mercy

Mitchum in *The Night of the Hunter*. Her body and face are mobile and flexible when necessary, an astonishing range of nuances may play over her face in a single shot, she can if need be let herself go to heights of joy, abjection or dementia – yet the formal means used remain small and uncomplicated. I want to put her alongside Willa Cather, Margot Fonteyn or Ella Fitzgerald, artists able to imply depths of feeling through spare, limpid means. With Gish, this toughness and limpidity, this steeliness and simplicity, is of a piece with the prevalent conceptions of light, virtue and femininity. Her body and performance can seem to emanate the same qualities the light is moulding. This is why all that white light took so breathtakingly, why she shines so compellingly in the dark.

There is one film that acts like a hiccup in accounts of Lillian Gish's career. It cannot be avoided – it makes a loud noise – but it is quickly passed over. This is *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). It certainly is not her finest hour – *True Heart Susie*,

Broken Blossoms, *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Wind* among her silent features may vie for that honour – but it does make explicit the concatenation of gender, race and light that is a key part of her stardom.

The ideal of his dreams

The Birth of a Nation recounts the history of the Civil War and the Reconstruction period through the intertwined stories of two families, the Southern Camerons and the Northern Stonemans. Gish plays Elsie Stoneman, who becomes the sweetheart of Ben Cameron (Henry B. Walthall). It is tempting to treat the relation between the history and the love story in terms of the former disrupting the latter, lovers torn apart by ideology and reunited by the triumph of right (in this case, white supremacy). In part this is undoubtedly correct. Elsie and Ben do not meet until after the war, but her father is a Northern congressman committed to civil liberties in the South; when she discovers Ben's involvement with the Ku Klux Klan, she has to break off the relationship; it is only when the black population have been revealed to Elsie and her father in their true colours (as it were), and Ben and the KKK have routed the population, that the couple can be reconciled.

Yet there is more to it than this. Gish as Elsie represents the white womanhood that must be won for the South, she incarnates the ideal that the South is presented as fighting to defend. What is most evidently at stake in *The Birth of a Nation* is not an economy based on slave labour or even hatred of black people, but an ideal of purity as embodied in the white woman.

Ben first sees Elsie in a miniature her brother Phil shows him. As an inter-title puts it, she is "the ideal of his dreams"; before she is a real person, she is an essence. When he meets her, she is in an iris shot which echoes the oval of the miniature. He shows her this, saying that he has carried her about with him "for a long, long time". She figures for Ben, the representative of the South, as the embodiment of an ideal.

Her goodness is established for us before this, from the first shot of her in the film. She is with her father and is the very model of a dutiful daughter, tending to his needs, making him the centre of her attention. Stoneman represents white liberalism; in this most biological of films, he is therefore bald and lame and has a 'weakness' for a woman of mixed race. In the first shot of Elsie and him, most of her energy is put into fussing with his toupee, endlessly drawing attention to his lack of hair (and, by contemporary implication, of virility). There is something both comic and perverse about this image of filial devotion, this ministering to what the film constructs as crippled. When Elsie rides with Ben in the KKK parade at the end and in the final lovers' tableau, she has passed from her father's helpmeet to being her husband's, which in part signifies that Ben (the South) has rescued her (purity) from the sickness of the North.

But he has also rescued her from something else, a fate worse than death: marriage to a man of mixed race (Silas Lynch). This itself can be seen as a product of her father's weakness, for he has promoted Lynch politically and even looks pleased when Lynch tells him he wants to marry

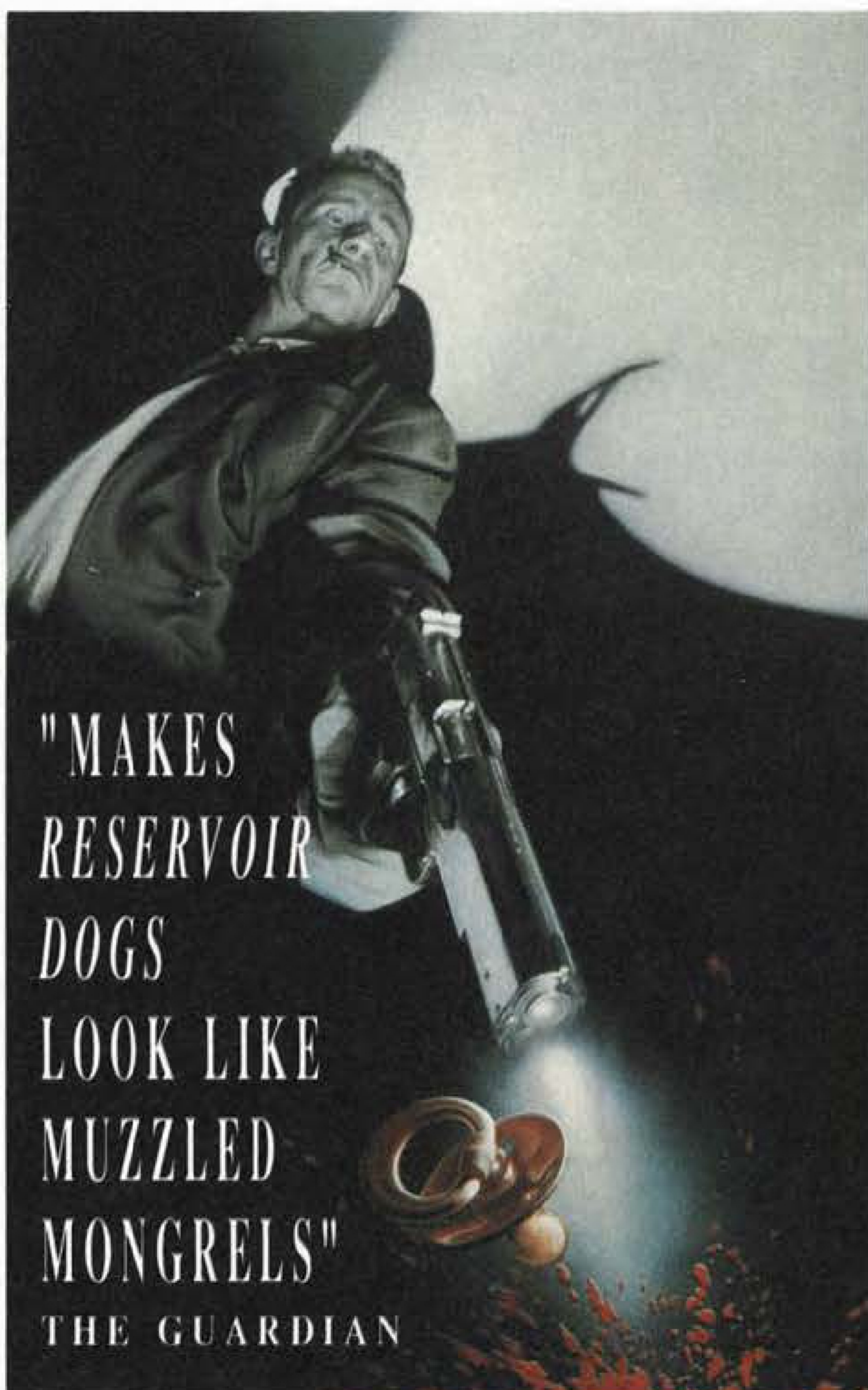
a white woman – until he realises that the woman is his own daughter. He has created the conditions which put her in jeopardy and too late learns the error of his ideas. In the famous and thrilling climax, three elements are intercut: Lynch menacing Elsie into a forced 'marriage'; the Cameron family besieged in a small log cabin by rebellious blacks; the gathering and riding of the Klan to the rescue. Elsie and the Camerons clearly symbolise the Southern ideals the Klan is about to redeem. The focus on Elsie, on the sexualisation of her plight in the race war, not only intensifies the drama – giving Ben, the leader, a personal investment in the situation – but also makes it clear that what the Klan stands for is the protection of white femininity.

The manipulation of light is less elaborated than in some of Gish's later films, but she and Ben do get the enveloping romantic treatment and she is picked out in scenes and has altered lighting for close-ups. What is at first sight surprising is that it is she, a Northerner, who is so glorified and not either of the Cameron daughters. Margaret (Miriam Cooper), the elder of these, is dark and oddly (indeed interestingly) sour looking. The younger, Flora (Mae Marsh), is excitable and nervy. Neither has Elsie/Gish's stillness and sureness, something brought out amusingly by her startled reaction to Flora's excessively affectionate greeting when they meet for the first time. It is these qualities – Gish's Northern steely simplicity of purity – that the film lauds, not the more debilitating forms of Southern femininity.

Yet this is, in fact, crucial to the film's project, which is, as we tend curiously to forget, to depict the birth, the coming into being, of a new entity, a nation. The fact that Elsie is a Northerner, quite apart from the association of the North with white light, is important in achieving a healing of the breach opened up by the Civil War. When she rides in the KKK parade, the nation is finally born, its unity assured under the banner of Southern values. She is the prize exhibit in the new white nation.

White magic

Gish's demeanour and style catch and reflect a way of seeing light that has deep roots in western tradition, roots distinguishable but not extricable from ways of seeing racial (and gender) difference. She is a great white star from a period when you had to be white to be a mass-market star. Paul Robeson or Lena Horne, Whoopi Goldberg or Wesley Snipes are routinely referred to as black stars, yet I still feel I am going to be thought out of order when I start talking about Lillian Gish as a white star. What it suggests is that a white star's magic is no less socially particular than a black star's. Yes, indeed, and the sooner white people accept the particularity of their image ideals the better – but that doesn't mean there's no magic, white or black. It takes nothing away from Gish – not her talent and intelligence, not the spell of her shining up there in the dark – to say that her special glow is nonetheless a specifically white one. Channel 4 will screen *The Birth of a Nation* on 9 September, *Broken Blossoms* on 19 September and *Intolerance* on 25 September as part of a forthcoming D. W. Griffith season



"MAKES
RESERVOIR
DOGS
LOOK LIKE
MUZZLED
MONGRELS"
THE GUARDIAN

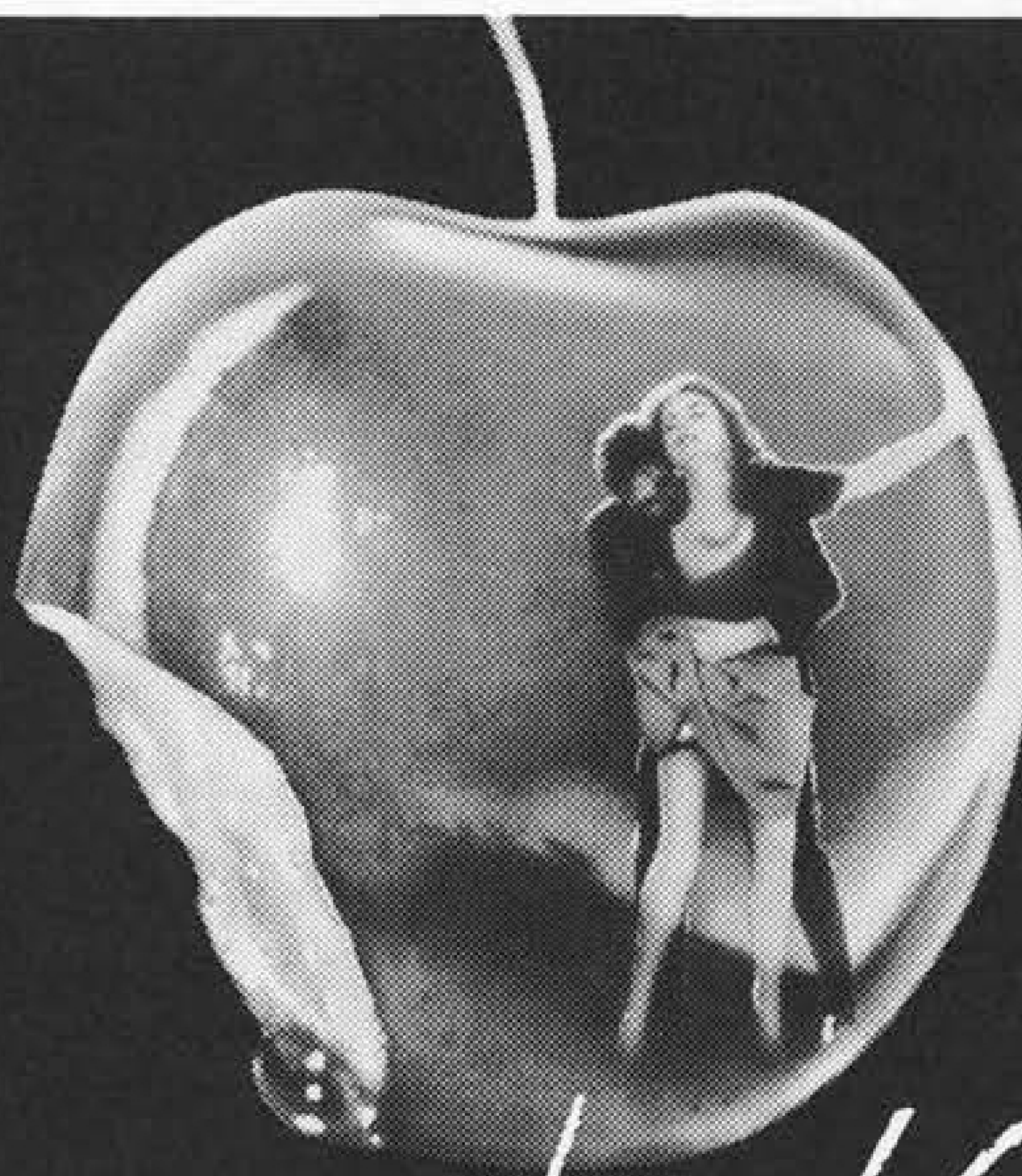
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● The video release of Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* gives a chance for a second, longer look. The film did moderately well at the box office, greatly enhancing Daniel Day-Lewis' reputation, but otherwise was granted a mixed reception. I suppose that most viewers appreciated it on the level of a simple action-adventure story with a historical setting, and it certainly mixed in just the right amount of violence and filmic mayhem to work in that way. (Several reviewers in fact welcomed what they saw as its unpretentiousness.) But outside that, it hit problems. *Sight and Sound's* review half-panned it as "Adirondack Vice" (a reference to Mann's other best-known work), suggesting he lacked the skills to handle such an expansive movie. Yet perhaps that too misses the point.

It seems a wise idea instead to relate Mann's film to the long tradition of versions of James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel – and there are

certainly plenty of them. Counting English-language versions alone, I have so far hunted out ten films, three plays (the earliest from 1842), one opera, two television series, nine comic books, two animated cartoons and two British radio versions (I have no information available for the US). Alongside these are countless book abridgements and adaptations – countless, because publishers often did not bother to give copies to the collecting libraries, so to find them is a matter of serendipity. Then there are at least two versions of versions: one, a book of a television series of the book (1958); the other a film of a comic of the book (1978).

The Last of the Mohicans seems, despite itself, to have had the narrative energy to become a certain kind of mythic classic. I say 'despite itself' because most literary critics are agreed that the book is intolerably badly written. This dismissal began almost as soon as Cooper died, when

Mark Twain delivered a famous damnation of his writing skill. Indeed, of all Cooper's mythic novels, *The Last of the Mohicans* is probably the least critically regarded. Yet something about the story has continued to 'work'.

This is especially so in this century. In about 1910, in both Britain and the US, a process began of converting a number of 'classics' into 'children's stories'. In Britain this was coupled with the rise of 'English' as a school discipline. Brian Doyle has argued in his *English and Englishness* (1990) that this burgeoned as a practice following the 1921 Newbolt Report (Newbolt being otherwise famous for his imperialist panegyric "Play up, play up, and play the game!"), which praised literature as a conveyor of a national imagination, a common sensibility uniting people across class. A number of publishers subsequently pushed out abridged 'classics', and later illustrated comic books, to help

FIRST AND LAST MOHICANS

Why has 'The Last of the Mohicans' been the subject of so many films and comic books? Martin Barker explains the story's complex attractions



make such good works readily available to young minds – only to be met with stern disapproval from many teachers.

The Last of the Mohicans seems to have been ideally suited to this purpose. But it also proved particularly amenable to adaptation as a movie. Indeed, *The Guardian* greeted Mann's film with the ironic comment: "Once upon a time this was actually a novel, but it has been adapted so many times it's moved entirely into the visual domain." Of all the adaptations, only the comic book versions (whose publishers were generally the most nervous about teachers' responses) stick reliably to the original narrative. Certainly the plot followed by Michael Mann's version is markedly changed.

How should we understand this narrative? An obvious starting point has to be the novel's deep concern with 'difference': the 'essential' differences between whites and Indians and

the running concern about 'miscegenation' with its connected fears about interracial sexual attraction. In Cooper's novel, and in most subsequent versions, Hawkeye is the site of all virtues: simplicity, honesty, strength, manhood, essential 'Americanness'. Repeatedly Hawkeye comments that he has "no taint" of Indian blood. Yet this is not a simple assertion of white superiority. In the Delaware council scene, the aged Chief Tamenund is given narrative authority to pronounce with scorn on white people's assumption that they own the world. And Hawkeye himself talks of the separate "gifts" of the different races. Admittedly, the twin deaths of Uncas and Cora prevent the reality of interracial sex. With the 'disappearance' of the Mohicans, Hawkeye effectively inherits their qualities.

So there is a complexity in the novel's attitude to 'savages'. The Hurons, no doubt, are

portrayed as irredeemably vicious and untrustworthy – at least when they are under the sway of Magua's rhetoric. In the book, his tremendous skill at persuasion acts like a 'wild card' – the Hurons have traditions, customs, beliefs and rules of justice, but Magua is able to pervert these into a force for his own ends. The Hurons' malleability is not simply the result of an inherent childishness, as a lot of Tarzan stories suggest about Africans.

If there is a weakness which the novel condemns, it is a strange one. In one scene the Hurons 'try' one of their own tribe, Reed-That-Bends, who ran away from Uncas. He is condemned for his 'cowardice' and is killed. His father is so shamed that he has to leave the tribe, even though he tries to deny his own son. "The Indians, who believe in the hereditary transmission of virtues and defects in character, suffered him to depart in silence." If the ►

BEI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS



Open to interpretation: George B. Seitz's 1936 film of 'The Last of the Mohicans', left; Michael Mann's 1992 version, below



In James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel, our first meeting with Hawkeye and Chingachgook is the occasion for a stage-managed debate about white treatment of Native Americans. It is also the first opportunity for 'philosophising' within the story, and sets the scene for our response to characters and events. Each subsequent comic book version changes the emphasis and orientation of the scene through its different manner of telling. Far left: Classics Illustrated, US, 1942. Inattention to artwork was almost a badge

of honour to the Gilberton Company, as it sought to persuade teachers that it wasn't supplanting the story with visual interest. Chingachgook, from the start, is reduced to grunt language. Left: Marvel Classics, US, 1977. Super-friendship and melodramatic positivity overcome racial difference. Above: Dark Horse Comics, US, 1992. The most reliable version in terms of narrative sequence, yet managing to be the most pro-Indian. Hawkeye acknowledges the bias in his own side's account.



RONALD GRANT

FILMOGRAPHY

Leather Stocking

D: D. W. Griffith. Single-reeler (1909)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: Theodore Marston (1911)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: Maurice Tourneur/
Clarence Brown (1920)

The Leatherstocking

D: George B. Seitz. A compilation of *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Deerslayer* (1924)

The Last of the Mohee-cans

Chaplinesque comedy, with spoof version of the novel/films in its middle (1926)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: Reeves B. Eason.
12-chapter serial (1932)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: George B. Seitz (1936)

The Last of the Redmen

(UK title: *The Last of the Redskins*)

D: George Sherman (1947)

Pathfinder

D: Sidney Salkow (1952)

The Last of the Mohicans

American television series, broadcast in Britain in the early 60s (1956)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: David Maloney. BBC
four-part Sunday serial (1971)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: James L. Conway.
Based on Classics Illustrated (1977)

The Last of the Mohicans

D: Michael Mann (1992)

◀ novel can mark this out as an odd belief, there is surely no simple racist doctrine in it.

The other famous aspect of the novel is its terror of cross-racial sex. Cora's horror at Magua's vengeful proposal that she become his squaw is clearly meant to engage with readers' anxieties. Yet the story assumes this reaction without approving of it. Cora, herself a 'half-caste', is in Cooper's words a "lovely being", brave, self-contained and strong far beyond her 'pure' sister Alice. Colonel Munro is filled with anger when he thinks that Heyward is rejecting his daughter Cora on racial grounds and Heyward has to convince him of his genuine love for Alice before Munro will let it pass. Yet while Heyward is left at the end to marry Alice, Uncas and Cora die. It's as if Cooper is aware of his readers' horror of interracial sexual attraction and miscegenation, but is horrified by that horror. The clash is unresolved – except in as much as the virtual death of Indian culture makes its resolution unnecessary.

What to me makes the novel effective is the interplay between two systems of narrative organisation. In one, there is endless discussion of "essential qualities". This is carried in particular through the narrator's comments on the characters' motivations. Yet the resolutions in the book are founded on historically specific relationships and cultural traditions.

At the Fort, the French defy all Colonel Munro's expectations by allowing an honourable surrender. And at the end, the Delawares – 'savage' though they are – are not only seen to be scrupulously governed by laws and rules of justice, but clearly have a determining history. When Uncas is revealed to be the Chief of the Mohicans, the Delawares override Magua's claims because the Mohicans represent their Ur-tribe, from which they are all descended. Without this second principle, the story could not be resolved in the way it is.

We might represent this clash of narrative principles as a conflict between racial theory

and determinate (albeit mythologised) history. Because the two cannot be resolved, the novel is inevitably 'incomplete'. Think of it as a flexible template. This is worth noting because each adaptation has shifted this uneasy balance and resolution into a new orbit. And more significantly, each recasts the myth to the political temper of its own time.

Red hordes

Two things seem to be going on simultaneously. On the one hand, there are clear, self-conscious traditions within the adaptations. For example, just about every comic book references an N. C. Wyeth illustration to a 1919 edition of the book. Wyeth depicted Heyward wrestling, legs intertwined, with Magua. In all subsequent versions, the stance and setting are identical, but the opponents are two Indians.

Similar links can be found in the films. George Seitz's 1936 movie borrowed whole sequences from the Tourneur/Brown 1920 silent film, and was in turn looted for footage for the 1956 American television adaptation. Michael Mann acknowledged his debt to Philip Dunne's 1936 screenplay, from which many memorable lines are taken wholesale. (In both versions, Hawkeye is arrested at the Fort for helping the colonials to escape to their homes. In the ensuing confrontation, he addresses Major Heyward, who has demanded his hanging: "Major, some day you and I are going to have a serious disagreement.") Yet whatever the continuities, the story remains a malleable source for the stating of different political positions. This flexibility is achieved through three processes: alterations to the sequence of events, shifts in motivation, and the moments of philosophising.

There have been so many changes in plot that it's hard to know which to choose as illustrations. The 1920 version, for example, not only isolates Magua as a lone villain, but introduces an English equivalent: a Captain Ran-



Boundary crossing: all the versions of Cooper's story, including the Tourneur/Brown 1920 film, right, are obsessed by the fears and attractions of relationships between white and Native Americans

dolph, “more interested in women than in war”, who betrays the Fort to the French and then dies in the ensuing massacre. It also introduces the most common change of all in having Magua die at the hands of Chingachgook rather than Hawkeye – having the father revenge his son’s death seems to enshrine a more basic sense of justice. Both the 1936 and 1992 film versions deny Cora’s mixed race, reverse the characters of Cora and Alice, and have Alice commit suicide at Uncas’ death. But where the 1936 version has an English troop rescue both Hawkeye and Heyward at the end, Mann inserts a terrifying death-by-burning for Heyward, who thus saves Hawkeye’s life and vindicates himself.

We can learn even more from the ways motivation is altered and from the moments when privileged characters are allowed to give their views – or are not. Sometimes such changes are crude statements of ideology. The 1942 Classics Illustrated version, for example, produced just as the US was about to enter the Second World War and in the midst of a fever of anti-Japanese prejudice, simply reduced all Indians (including the Mohicans) to subhuman chatter, while the French were carefully ‘excused’ any role in the massacre. White unity in the face of yellow or red hordes clearly had priority.

Other versions, particularly the films, are more sophisticated. The 1936 film, very much a ‘New Deal’ adaptation, focuses all philosophising in Hawkeye. Following the first escape from Magua, he talks to Cora (who had begun with a deep English mistrust of him, based on ‘old principles’): “A man could spend his life walking this country, and never walk the same trail twice. Every time I blaze a new trail I imagine new cities springing up at the end of them. I wonder if you can imagine what it feels like to be the first.” One can easily see audiences re-imagining their own history through this. And certainly by the end of the film Cora can, so a new alliance of old and new is achieved through their budding romance and through Hawkeye becoming a scout for the English (a noteworthy narrative change).

Hollow promises

The 1977 version is balder still in its rhetoric. After their first escape from Magua, Cora, gazing on the handsome, watchful Uncas, says to Hawkeye: “I find it difficult to keep in mind that a man with such sensitive eyes can be a savage... the horrible stories I’ve heard about the Indians – the way they torture... scalp.” This hilarious remark is treated very solemnly by Hawkeye: “You’d better bone up on your history, ma’am, scalping started in Europe long before the white man brought his poison here and taught it to the Indians, so that the Indian could be paid a bounty every time he brought in a scalp from an enemy – proof of the kill.” Can you imagine that from Cooper?

In Michael Mann’s version, the English are unreliable, arrogant imperialists, whom ordinary Americans must defy in order to protect their homes. And whereas in the book Magua is motivated by revenge for having been punished like an animal by Colonel Munro, for Mann his motivation is a desire to become a ‘white capi-

talist’, giving up the “ways of the Hurons” for trade, wealth and luxury.

This shift in perspective is linked in Mann’s version with an overall tendency to make Hawkeye the most Indian character of all. Whereas in the book Hawkeye often comments on Uncas’ greater tracking skills, in Mann’s film all the skills are Hawkeye’s. And while in the novel great attention is paid to distinguishing the different “virtues” of each people, in Mann’s film you often can’t tell them apart, as in a scene near the beginning, when Hawkeye and company return from a hunt to the inhabitants of their village – a mixture of whites and Native Americans filmed so they are indistinguishable. The screen presence of Daniel Day-Lewis participates in this myth: his stillness, wild hair, few words and physical poise resonate with classic ‘good Indian Chief’ depictions that I can still remember from childhood. Hawkeye/Day-Lewis is interracial, therefore all political issues about race are ‘resolved’ in and through him. Thus does multiculturalism find a myth to bear it.

Mann has made a clever, beautiful, but in the end hollow film, celebrating cultural pluralism but depoliticising racial politics. The final shot, of Hawkeye with his new girl by his side and Chingachgook surveying the tree-clothed hills of America, seems to celebrate a merging of the races, a new hope and a cleansing reminiscent of the hollow promises of Bill Clinton’s 1992 election campaign. It’s an oversimplified and ultimately meaningless promise of simple renewal, in which all issues of power, oppression and injustice are smogged out by a rhetoric of vague hope and kindness.

It is curious to compare Mann’s film with the Jack Jackson comic book version of the same year (from Dark Horse Comics). Jackson, one of the original Underground Comix artists, has built his subsequent reputation on a series of 70s comics depicting Native American tribal histories (most famously *Comanche Moon*, 1979). His new version of Cooper’s novel is curiously the most reliable in terms of following the original plot, and is the only version I have come across which includes the disturbing incident where Hawkeye slits a horse’s throat lest it reveal their hiding place.

But because of the manner of his retelling, Jackson turns Cooper’s ambiguous racism into a strongly pro-Indian argument. Through simple comic book devices, he causes us to question the reliability of English accounts of their own motives, while inviting us to see ourselves through the Indians’ picture of the impact of whites on them. Alice is made to seem ‘flighty’ compared with Cora’s *gravitas*; even though Magua does turn out to be bad, the prejudice against him is noted as a problem; Chingachgook is given space to comment on the destruction of his people. Without adjusting the story at all, Jackson comes close to making it a Native American myth.

The pity is that of the two, it is Mann’s film that will be remembered. And the next version of *The Last of the Mohicans* will no doubt pillage bits of his movie, as it rewrites this malleable mythology of ‘America’ to whatever new circumstances call it forth again.

THE ORIGINAL STORY

After a scene outlining the context of the English/French wars, we go to an English camp to the north of Fort William Henry. Major Heyward is deputed to get Cora and Alice safely to their father, Colonel Munro, at the Fort. Magua, an Indian guide, proposes to lead them by a short cut through the forest. We then meet three other key characters: Nathaniel Bumppo, alias Hawkeye, alias ‘La Longue Carabine’, a lone woodsman; his friend Chingachgook, ageing Chief of the Mohicans; and Chingachgook’s son Uncas, the last of their tribe. They are discussing the state of the world when they hear the travellers’ approach.

When the two groups meet, it becomes clear that Magua had been leading his charges into a Huron trap. Magua flees to join his waiting Indians; Hawkeye agrees to try to save the travellers. They hurry to the river and hide in an island cave. Several skirmishes take place until the defenders’ powder is used up. In desperation, Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas leave to replenish their weapons.

Magua captures the four refugees and we learn his motivation – he had been whipped for drunkenness by Colonel Munro. His revenge will be to take Cora as his squaw. Cora rejects him, horrified, but as she faces death Hawkeye and party arrive to rescue them. Magua escapes.

Hawkeye leads the party to the besieged Fort William Henry. An interlude in the Fort follows, in which Heyward declares his love for Alice. Munro had thought Heyward loved Cora, and accuses him of prejudice – because, as we now learn, Cora is half-caste.

Munro is forced to surrender, being refused help by General Webb, but is told that they can leave with their colours. But Magua has other plans, and as the English leave, hundreds are massacred by the Hurons. Magua again captures Cora and Alice. Hawkeye, Chingachgook, Uncas, Heyward and Munro pursue Magua into Canada. Eventually they find his village. They devise a series of tricks to rescue Alice. Cora meanwhile is being held at a neighbouring Delaware village.

Magua and his warriors head to the Delaware village where a council takes place before the ancient Chief Tamenund. At first he is persuaded by Magua, then half-swayed by Cora, and finally swung by the revelation of who Uncas is: the last of the rightful Chiefs of the Mohicans. But under Delaware law, Magua is allowed to go free, and to take Cora as his ‘prize’.

At dusk, Hawkeye, Uncas (who clearly loves Cora) and Chingachgook lead a company to rescue her. In the attempt, Cora is stabbed by an Indian who dies at Uncas’ hand, and Magua kills Uncas. As Magua flees, Hawkeye shoots him.

At the end, the Indians bury Cora and Uncas. Heyward will marry Alice, and leave America. The grieving Chingachgook is joined by Hawkeye, as Tamenund mourns the passing of the Indians in the face of the whites, and especially Uncas, “the last of the Mohicans”.

Is Hollywood on the Clyde a foolish idea? And if so, what kind of cinema should a country such as Scotland support? Colin McArthur offers some solutions

● "...to ensure the development of a viable, vigorous, and substantial Scottish film industry designed to attract and deploy the talents of Scottish film-makers and to enable them to make films in their own country..." (From the 1991 Annual Report, Scottish Film Production Fund.)

This, of course, is a fantasy which has beguiled the Scottish Film Production Fund (SFPF) and its parent body, the Scottish Film Council (SFC), since its inception in 1982. As, in these post-Marxist days, babies are being thrown out with the bathwater all over Europe, many indispensable concepts are being jettisoned. One such concept, *uneven development*, describes perfectly Scotland's relationship with diverse sectors of the UK economy, not least film production. To put it bluntly, Scotland is, on the film-making front, a third world country – but this is tragically misrecognised by those holding the purse strings north of the border. There have always been signs that the SFPF and SFC were on a collision course with reality. One of the earliest officers of the fund talked about discovering "the next generation of Bill Forsyths" and senior officers of the SFC, at their most delirious, have been heard to speak of "Hollywood on the Clyde".

When the stated policy is compared with the reality of the fund's most recent investment, *Prague*, the gulf is stark. Apart from the fact that producer Christopher Young, producer/director Ian Sellar and one of the principal actors, Alan Cumming, are Scots, *Prague* has nothing to do with Scotland and could not be remotely construed to fulfil what might be assumed to be a central impulse of a new national cinema – the exploration of the contradictions of the society from which it comes.

Individual film-makers should not be blamed for using whatever production mechanisms are available, but the Scots involved in

Prague were the figleaf which allowed the project to absorb a massive proportion of the SFPF and decorated the Euro-pudding the film was to become. During the period when *Prague* was in development and production, the SFPF stood at about £250,000 per annum. Over two financial years it invested no less than £130,000 in *Prague*, having in previous years put an equally generous £100,000 into an earlier film, *Venus Peter* (1989), by the same production/direction team. This tendency to put available eggs into a small number of baskets is reminiscent of central Scotland's costly dependence on a few heavy industries earlier in the century.

The precise details of the discussions between Young/Sellar and the SFPF will probably never be known, but what is clear is that Young himself would like to be making considerably cheaper films than *Prague*, at £1.95 million, turned out to be. Did the SFPF actively steer *Prague* towards inflationary mechanisms like the BBC's Screen Two, which put up about £500,000 of the budget?

There are cultural as well as economic questions to be asked. For example, it seems that Young, in the letter which accompanied his original script submission, indicated that the central character might be American (rather than, as in the realised film, Scottish). Despite the fact that this would further distance the already tenuous connection of the project with Scotland, the SFPF did not regard it as in any way problematic. While the fund's annual report makes much of the fact that the great bulk of *Venus Peter*'s budget entered the economy of the film's location, the Orkneys, it is silent about the destination of the budget for *Prague*, which entered economies far distant from Scotland's. A major insertion of French money brought *Prague*'s budget up to nearly £2 million and the project was designated a British/French co-production. In recompense, the French required that some 45 per cent of the budget be spent in France, a condition realised primarily by having the film processed at a French lab. As far as I am aware, none of *Prague*'s budget was spent in Scotland.

The main impulse of the SFPF is towards projects which will attract finance from diverse sources and consequently compete for attention on the world stage. A largely unrecognised contradiction here is that the larger the project, the less Scottish it becomes. It might be

argued that the fund's most successful area of operation has been in springboarding a handful of Scottish film-makers into international production. It has been the fund's practice to subsidise the graduation films of Scots students at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield. One such was Michael Caton-Jones' *The Riveter* (1986). Caton-Jones is now comfortably ensconced in Los Angeles. In an interview in *The Observer Magazine* in 1991, he remarked: "In a way I had no roots. I had left Scotland at 18 and drifted to the London area. Leaving for Los Angeles was no great wrench... I doubt if I'll go back to Britain." So much for the policy "to enable [Scottish film-makers] to make films in their own country." Caton-Jones is currently listed as director of the forthcoming *Rob Roy* (producer Peter Broughan, writer Alan Sharp), which is already in receipt of development finance from the fund.

Commitment to the mainstream

This springboarding of individual careers is joined by a complete misconception of what might constitute an appropriate production policy for Scotland's economic and cultural circumstances. There is one statistic which should be branded on the foreheads of those who call the shots in the SFPF and the SFC: of the eight feature films analysed in the 1993 *BFI Film and Television Handbook*, the average budget was £1.8 million, and the average net revenue only £0.8 million. Presumably data of this order was available to the SFPF when it became involved with *Prague*.

The root cause of the SFPF's and SFC's failure to articulate a meaningful production policy lies in their surrender to an industrial model rather than in posing the question in terms of *cultural need*. The fund's commitment to film as commodity is evident from the projects into which it puts the bulk of its funds and from the backgrounds of those who have recently served as part of the group which makes the funding decisions, including Roger Crittenden (NTFS); Bill Forsyth (director); Charles Gormley (director); Mamoun Hassan (producer); Liz Lohead (writer); Bernard MacLaverty (writer); Lynda Myles (producer); Bill Paterson (actor); Iain Smith (producer) and Archie Tait (producer).

Individually these are all bright and able people, but collectively, with the exception of Liz Lohead, the orthodoxy of their recent back-

IN
PRAISE
OF A
POOR
CINEMA

grounds and their commitment to mainstream and therefore expensive aesthetic forms are overwhelming. A costing of the projects in which they have been involved within recent years would be hardly likely to dip beneath the average of £1.8 million cited above and would most likely be considerably above it. The most glaring absence from the list is of any figure who could bring in a feature film (such as Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein*) for around £300,000. The absence is not accidental. Like the SFC, the SFPF has from the outset set its face firmly against the aesthetic tradition of such films. One of the most unfortunate results of their freezing out of alternative voices is that public funders and potential private investors in Scotland are kept in the dark about film production practices which are not only more commercially viable, but more culturally necessary than the practices currently funded.

Institutions are rarely monolithic, and the current Director of the SFPF, Kate Swan, was herself the producer of *Play Me Something* (1989), an excellent film by Timothy Neat which managed, on a budget of £375,000 and in a way *Prague* did not, to be both Scottish and European (and a great deal more) simultaneously. To underline the lack of monolithicism, the SFPF put a small amount of money into *Play Me Something*. But the promising track record of the fund's current Director and its own occasional backing of the right horse must be set against the orthodoxy of those making the funding decisions and where they have put the vast bulk of available monies.

The present board gives even less comfort to those looking for a low-budget cinematic aesthetic: Allan Shiach (Chairman); David Aukin (Head of Drama, Channel 4); Colin Cameron (Head of Television, BBC Scotland); Paddy Higson (independent producer); Sandy Johnson (independent television director); Margaret Matheson (independent film producer for television); Scott Meek (independent film producer for television); George Mitchell (Controller of Programmes, Grampian TV); Colin Young (former Director of the National Film and Television School). There is one figure in the above line-up who has recently become a key player. Under the name Allan Shiach he is a rich and prominent businessman (Chairman of the Macallan-Glenlivet whisky operation); under the name Allan Scott he is a successful Holly-

wood screenwriter, most notably in his collaborations with Nicolas Roeg. He is now chairman of both the SFC and the SFPF.

It is possibly not accidental that following Shiach/Scott's entry to the Scottish film scene there should emerge *Movie Makers*, an event designed to explore the craft of classic Hollywood screenwriting which brought William Goldman to Scotland. The discourse about classic Hollywood screenwriting is immensely interesting and has achieved considerable prominence in recent years through manuals such as Syd Field's *Screenplay* and *The Screenwriter's Workbook* and through Robert McKee's Screen Structure Course. But one of its effects is to fetishise the classic two-hour Hollywood script and forbid entry to other ways of thinking and making cinema. As such, it dovetails perfectly with the dominant ideology of film production in Scotland.

One other recently created mechanism has given the final impetus to Scotland's headlong rush towards an industrial conception of film-making – the Glasgow Film Fund. It currently stands at £150,000 per annum, made up of contributions from the Glasgow Development Agency, Strathclyde Business Development, Glasgow City Council and the European Regional Development Fund, and will be administered by the SFPF, concentrating nearly all public funding of film-making in Scotland within a tight group of individuals working to highly exclusive policy criteria. The GFF's terms of reference are frankly commercial, designed to stimulate film-making in the Glasgow conurbation and to pull money into the local economy. Only feature film projects with a budget of at least £500,000 are said to be eligible to apply.

Staggering banality

It is perhaps understandable, given the career profiles of those who serve on its board, that the SFPF should lock on to an industrial model of film-making. It is more surprising that an ostensibly cultural body like the SFC should espouse the same values. It recently produced *The Charter for the Moving Image in Scotland*, a document of staggering banality, which, when it is not whining about inequity of public funding of the moving image in Scotland in relation to the rest of the UK, proposes utopian structures of truly megalomaniac proportions such as a

Scottish Screen Agency which would subsume all existing film mechanisms and concentrate funding powers in even fewer hands. Symptomatically, during the period when the resounding phrases of the charter were being sculpted, Scotland's only independent film studio and lab facility closed down.

All this would be serious enough, but conversations with Scottish film-makers who have had dealings with these bodies suggest a more disturbing picture in which those projects most rooted in Scottish culture and most challenging to the dominant ideology of production are actively opposed, if not as a matter of explicit policy by these bodies, then by powerful voices within them. It might indeed be asserted that the most distinctively Scottish of recent films (*Silent Scream*; *Tickets To The Zoo*; *Blue Black Permanent*; *As An Eilean*) have been made because forces outside Scotland, particularly two English commissioning editors at Channel 4, Alan Fountain and Rod Stoneman, have been prepared to put money into projects figures in the Scottish film establishment would have preferred to see die. As a footnote to that establishment's judgment, the projects it has been most hostile to are the ones which have won awards at foreign festivals.

The absence of cultural analysis in the discourses of the SFC and the SFPF has meant that they have both been unequipped to think of alternatives to the industrial model, or to recognise the problems relating to national culture and identity that the industrial model might create. For instance, a recent article in the Scottish press indicated that research had revealed that German executives have an image of Scotland which leads them to think of it as a place to rest in rather than to invest in. In short, 'dream Scotland'. To the extent that the main impulse of Scottish films is to address a wider 'market' – a key principle of the SFPF – the dilemma they face is how to do so without recourse to regressive discourses such as 'dream Scotland'. It might be thought, given their commitment to an industrial model of film-making and their rhetoric about attracting investment into Scotland, that the SFPF and SFC would have given some thought to how the 'dream Scotland' narrative might be dislodged from the heads of German executives to be replaced by other narratives more conducive to seeing Scotland as a modern industrial ►

◀ nation. But there is no evidence that the SFPF and SFC are even aware of the problem.

The SFC and SFPF have had too easy a ride. Mainly because film-making grew out of the sponsored documentary tradition of Films of Scotland, there have been no substantial cadres of avant-garde independents putting pressure on them, analogous to that exercised on the BFI in England and Wales. With a few honourable exceptions, local film journalists have shown no capacity to interrogate, as opposed to simply report, the initiatives of Scottish film institutions. This environment has reinforced the sleekness of the SFC and SFPF and ensured that they would face no sustained pressure to articulate policy options and discuss them with their constituencies. Thus the industrial model of film-making simply 'emerged' in Scotland, rather as the leader of the Conservative Party used to, without any proper discussion of alternatives. What, then, is to be done?

Questions of national identity

When the SFC and SFPF finally face up to the fact that film-making in Scotland of a kind relevant to questions of national identity and culture must be low-budget film-making, they are going to have to educate themselves and their constituencies into a different set of aesthetic strategies and institutional arrangements. An obvious first step would be to strengthen the workshop sector in Scotland, the only sector (apart from a handful of independents) with the necessary expertise to facilitate what could be called a Poor Scottish Cinema, that is to say poor in resources and rich in imagination. The Scottish workshops ought, in effect, to become mini-studios through which grantees from the SFPF should realise their projects.

The SFPF must also begin to recruit to its board figures who have some understanding of the aesthetics and economics of Poor Cinema. One obvious such figure is James Mackay (as it happens, a Scot from Inverness), whose production credits include Ron Peck's *What Can I Do With A Male Nude?* (budget £5,000), Derek Jarman's *The Last of England* (budget under £250,000) and *The Garden* (budget £370,000), and *Man To Man* (budget £155,000). Mackay's projects have consistently used Super-8 (often blown up to 35mm for cinematic release) and, increasingly, electronic imaging. Another recruit to the SFPF ought to be the man who coined the term 'electronic imaging', Colin MacLeod, a world authority on the subject working at Napier University, Edinburgh.

The SFC and the SFPF must then lead their constituencies through a process of discussion about how imaginative and culturally relevant cinema can be achieved on meagre resources. There are good examples from within Scottish film history itself, for example the Bill Douglas trilogy, the early feature films of Bill Forsyth and certain of the films of Murray Grigor, Brian Crumlish and Mike Alexander. But examples should also be drawn from further afield: Chris Marker's *La Jetée*, which is wholly, and Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*, which is partly, made up of still images; Jean-Luc Godard's *Les Carabiniers* and Dusan Makavejev's *The Switchboard Operator*, which make extensive use of pre-existing

One admires those Scots who have achieved some international recognition (well, most of them)

footage; Hans Jürgen Syberberg's *Ludwig: Requiem For A Virgin King*, which instead of built sets uses blown-up transparencies as background to the action; the austere cinema of Robert Bresson; the cinema of Derek Jarman and other English independents; third world cinemas, particularly those of Africa and Latin America.

Getting budgets below £300,000 would not only make profitability more likely for individual films, but would see many more specifically Scottish features emerging, perhaps eventually reaching the critical mass of ten features a year which the SFC is fond of canvassing. What it would produce at least is a pack of cards whereby the nature of a Scottish cinema, its recurrent themes and styles, might begin to be discerned. As things stand, the possibility of a nationally specific Scottish cinema (which need not preclude influences from Hollywood and elsewhere or fail to recognise the necessary hybridity of all national cultures in the modern world) is becoming increasingly remote as Scots film-makers are forced into contortions to raise money from American and pan-European sources.

This leads naturally to the question of how critical recognition of national cinemas is generated. Festival entry and subsidy for distribution and exhibition may not (by themselves) be the most effective or economic routes. There is a historical lesson to be learned here. Italian neo-realism, French *nouvelle vague*, Brazilian *cinema novo* and so on were internationally recognised as such mainly because they were taken up and discussed in film criticism and journalism. It is not beyond the bounds of imagination that a *nouveau cinéma écossais* might be similarly constructed. As is so often the case in Scotland (as with *Gregory's Girl*), celebration abroad might facilitate recognition (and further funding) at home. It would be nice to think that a simple journal could be sent free of charge to every cinematheque, film festival, film magazine and Channel 4-type television network in the world which, without being a hype or lapdog journal, would have as its main aim to outline what is happening in Scottish cinema and to construct its diverse films as some kind of collectivity. There are several historical precedents for this, for example the journals circulated by Unifrance and Film Polski.

Tartan shorts

This essay will be read perversely on several fronts. It will be suggested that it is intrinsically hostile to classic, narrative cinema, though that can be easily discounted by the most cursory glance at the author's other critical writings. It will be suggested that the concept of Poor Cinema envisages a restricted range of aesthetic forms. Quite the reverse, as the examples cited (from the Loachian realism of *Tickets To The Zoo* to the Brechtian multi-textu-

ality of *Les Carabiniers*) indicate. Finally, it will be suggested that it trashes the entrepreneurial efforts of individual Scots film-makers. This also is not true. One can have nothing but admiration for those Scots who have fought their way through to some kind of international recognition (well, most of them) although they may have had to pay a price in terms of the relevance of their work to Scottish culture.

As this article was going to press the SFPF did two things which encapsulate all that is wrong with its policy. It issued a press release hailing the success of the first round of short films it funds jointly with BBC Scotland. Renamed 'Tartan Shorts' – appropriately, the project wraps itself in that most regressive of Scottish discourses, Tartanry – it provides for three ten-minute shorts to be funded each year at a cost of £30,000 per short. The press release is clear about the kind of films to be funded. They must be "narrative shorts" and it is envisaged that grantees will "springboard from the making of a short on to a first feature film."

Concurrent with the press release, two young Glasgow-based film/video-makers, Douglas Aubrey and Alan Robertson, received a letter from the SFPF informing them that their request for funding to complete their feature film had been turned down. *Work, Rest and Play* is a bitter, Kerouacian road movie in five 20-minute parts, two of which have already been completed with £6,000 of Aubrey and Robertson's own money and the down time of sympathetic facilities houses, independent producers and educational institutions. It is also a technological palimpsest for our time, involving video footage shot on VHS, low- and high-band U-matic, Hi8 and Betacam SP; computer graphics realised by Quantel Paintbox, Spaceword Matisse and Wavefront; and the deployment of sound samplers and digital storage systems. In short, it is a superb example of Poor Cinema.

It is scarcely credible, but at the very moment when it was passing up the chance to put £15,000 (the sum requested) towards the realisation of a feature-length Scottish road movie, the SFPF was trumpeting abroad the fact that it had invested £90,000 in three ten-minute shorts. By a cruel irony, the director of one of these shorts is Peter Capaldi, writer of the flashily empty road movie *Soft Top, Hard Shoulder*, which has none of the 'condition of Britain' bite of *Work, Rest and Play*.

More than ever, the creeping centralisation of film funding in Scotland needs to be reversed and the following key issue addressed: what kind of cultural and economic (in that order) policies need to be adopted by Scottish film institutions to create in the first instance a culturally relevant and in the longer term economically viable Scottish cinema? To raise such an issue implies the possibility of change in those great lumbering dinosaurs of Scottish film culture, the SFC and the SFPF. Dream on! *A critique of the policies of particular institutions is a separate question from the personal qualities and professional competence of those institutions' officers. I would like to put on record my thanks to Kate Swan, director, and Ivan Mactaggart, administrator, of the SFPF, who have invariably been friendly, helpful and efficient in any dealings I have had with them.*

Fog and drizzle

The very day Rank announced – at a Cannes film festival which had honoured the latest work of Mike Leigh and Ken Loach (hardly the most mainstream of British cinema-makers) – that all its investment would be, surprise, surprise, in American movies, I happened to be reading *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* by Geoffrey McNab. McNab recounts a trip that the Methodist flour magnate made in 1945 to the San Simeon Xanadu of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. The purpose of the trip: to convince the Hearst press to puff British pictures, or at least not to continue to ignore them. The quid pro quo: Rank would, of course, spend big dollars advertising in those same newspapers.

In post-war entertainment, as in politics, the humble Brit had to buy their seat at the conference table or, to use the metaphor of the time, to purchase 'a place in the sun'. England (for it is English cinema we are talking about here, with all the values that implies) was still a place of fogs and drizzle.

Tarantino and 'Get Carter'

I doubt whether anyone would bid for the metamorphic privilege of being a fly on the wall at that doubtless unexciting colloquy. Certainly the effect of Rank's wheel-greasing was slight at best. For it was quite clear to the American film industry what exactly were the deficiencies of its ally's product. The *Kinematographic Weekly* characterised British films with a brutal partiality: "1) the action was too slow. 2) there was too much dialog. 3) The actors talked too fast and their accents and slang words were difficult to understand. 4) The actresses looked dowdy and the actors seemed effeminate. 5) The physical quality of the films often looked inferior to American productions."

Louis B. Mayer, the true paterfamilias of the Hardy family, was even more succinct. He said: "Don't let Mr Rank wave his Union Jack at me!" There was a perceived feeling that audiences in the US thought that the kind of actors who spoke Brit already had a proper place in the movies – playing butlers, ladies' maids and eccentric professors.

Rank admitted that, yes, British accents were a problem, and, it has to be acknowledged, British tempo was perhaps too slow, and, well you might be right, the actresses weren't glamorous enough. But Rank had a solution to this seemingly vast cultural divide: for future productions he would hire American stars.

At times like this there is a cliché button on the word processor which you hit and it prints out: *plus ça change*. But I was also reminded of this David and Goliath struggle, in which Goliath is always unscripturally triumphant, on the last night of 'Shots in the Dark', Nottingham's Crime and Mystery Festival (of which, to declare an interest, I am one of the organisers).

Our closing film was Danny Cannon's first feature *The Young Americans*: a high-energy clubs, drugs and guns gangland pic starring Harvey Keitel as a Stateside Drug Enforcement Agent seconded to London to teach our boys in blue how to beat the big international traffickers. The audience,

Forget the flood of cops and robbers and remember 'The Wednesday Play', our own 'nouvelle vague', argues Michael Eaton as he reflects on English film and television

most of whom were in their early 20s, reacted enthusiastically and one of the statements heard over and over again was: "how good it is to see a British thriller."

Quentin Tarantino, who was over for the festival, was asked what his favourite British films were. His reply, perhaps unsurprisingly for the director of *Reservoir Dogs*, was *Get Carter*, *The Long Good Friday* and *The Hit* – none of which fulfil the five-fold inventory of dismissal elaborated in 1945 (although these three films do, of course, display a dizzying array of regional accents).

It is hardly a bolt from the blue to discover that audiences for a crime film festival think that the British film industry doesn't make enough thrillers. But I did have to point out to Tarantino that had we been speaking of television, it would have to be said that contemporary British drama is awash with cops and robbers.

Welcoming the prospect of a series of repeats of *The Wednesday Play*, I am struck once again by the pertinence of the *Kinematograph Weekly's* litany of 50 years ago: these television films were often slow-paced; writers such as Jim Allen, David Mercer, Nell Dunn *et al* did tend to use a lot of words; the specificity of regional accents was usually out on parade; the stories did tend to be about the seamy, un-glamorous side of life; the films were low-budget productions shot on 16mm. And yet these productions reflected, indeed, created, the mood of the nation in the 60s much more tellingly than anything that was coming out of Wardour Street at the time – product all too often trying to kow-tow to second-guessed notions of what the American market was prepared to accommodate.

The tragedy is that it has been nigh on impossible in the last few years to pitch television drama which would extend this genealogy. If a certain aspect of television drama was once our art cinema, our *nouvelle vague*, our neo-realism, then those days are

long over. The preferred narrative patterns now are largely borrowed from mainstream cinema but stretched out, often past breaking point, in order to conform to the required mini-series format and even enthusiastically adopting the Hollywood notion of the sequel (dangerous these days for writers to kill off a character at the end: the fictional personage might turn out to be a welcome source of future income).

Cherishing tradition

I should be the last one to carp about stories which include American characters and which talk of the 'special relationship' between them. After all, I did once pen a picture about a blacklisted American screenwriter in exile in 50s Britain. Naively, at the time of writing *Fellow Traveller*, I assumed that the necessity to set this story in both England and California would be an obstacle to production, and it was perceived as such by the UK television companies which turned it down. Home Box Office, on the contrary, regarded this as perfectly organic co-production material.

We do have a tradition of story-telling in film, whether that film is designed for the small screen or the auditorium, which has often conformed to the austere characteristics outlined at the start of this article. But somehow, and perhaps perversely, I think this is a tradition which we should be prepared to cherish and try continually to revitalise. I feel this even more acutely as reports reach me of the fire at Hendersons Film Laboratories. At the time of going to press we are still awaiting a fuller inventory of the disaster, but right now the rumour mill is grinding depressingly small and it would be sensationalist to speculate on which prints, and more importantly, which negatives, have been lost.

Quite possibly, a substantial chunk of our "dowdy" heritage went up in smoke last weekend.



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The blondest thing on the beach

I want to be the girl who does almost nothing. Ever since I started to watch movies when I was about five years old, I have wanted to be the woman in the beautiful dress who appears and it's enough to stop traffic, stop the orchestra, stop the plot. The right girl in the right dress can win over anybody, even the guy with the gun. And she doesn't have to argue. She doesn't even need dialogue. She just is.

The Beach Blanket Bingo movies were very popular in Buffalo in the late 60s, at least in my house. I can't remember at all what they were about, apart from the troubles of falling in love with the right person. But we didn't care about all that. We just waited for the girl in the dress.

This was a girl called Candy who appeared in almost every movie. (Maybe it was Cindy, but I'll call her Candy.) She never had any lines. She danced in the party-on-the-beach scenes, where all the girls wore bikinis and wiggled their bottoms, snapped their wrists and danced the pony, the frug, and the dance where you pretend to swim and then go under water, holding your nose with one hand and shaking the other above your head.

Although everyone else on the beach was in swimwear, Candy was wearing a dress. This dress was very short, and made out of silvery hanging things. Everyone would be dancing and Frankie Avalon would say "Hey, there's Candy!". Then we'd see Candy doing a shimmy while the drummer beat out a roll. All the hanging things went flying sideways, and Candy's blonde hair went everywhere. She looked like an exploding bomb. Her shimmy would end in a POW! hip thrust. The next shot would be of a guy who'd been watching falling over on to the sand. Candy would do another hip thrust and POW! another guy on the sand, then another, and another. I think there was one time when she flattened everybody, and someone in the band said "Well, looks like we might as well go home."

Wonderful and wicked

Candy was wild. Once she started that shimmy, none of the guys could stop watching her. The surf music had really fast, Hawaiian-sounding rhythms, like on 'Wipe-out', and Candy could do all that with her hips. Even at the age of five, I knew that was wonderful and wicked at the same time, to do that with your hips. It was like running down the street naked - you knew something bad would happen, eventually, after all the attention. Candy looked so happy when she was dancing. Only the boys looked miserable.

Candy never had a boyfriend, which was noticeable because the movies were always about pairing off. Everyone dancing was in boy/girl couples, but Candy was up on a platform, near the band. Or maybe there was no band and they were playing records. I don't know. They were stupid, cheap little movies and no one paid any attention to them. But my sister and I liked them.

We got all overexcited watching Candy dance on the little black and white television up in our parents' bedroom. The

The girl in the short dress, Buster Keaton and Frankie Avalon are hymned by film-maker and performance artist Annie Griffin as she remembers the Beach Blanket movies of her youth



Ready to explode: Candy does a shimmy in 'Muscle Beach Party'

movies were on after school in the afternoons, before Mom came home from work and started cooking and doing laundry and listening to my grandmother on the telephone. In the Beach Party movies, everyone was dancing and playing and looking for fun and romance and kisses in the dark. For my sister and I, growing up was the dream of becoming a teenager. Anything beyond that was inconceivable.

Candy would have to leave every beach party, as there was always a dirty old man who appeared and started to chase her. He never had any lines either. He wore a white suit with a bow tie, a white straw hat, and strange pale make-up with dark, frowning lips. He always looked sweaty and unhappy. We thought it was because he was old. We thought he wanted to be a teenager too, and join in the dancing. Candy scowled at him, but she kept running.

Years later I found out that the actor was Buster Keaton. I saw his early movies, those masterpieces of comic timing and intricate stuntwork. I read about how difficult his career had been, how he'd lost all his money and his wife and become alcoholic and ended up so desperate in his old age he had to do these crummy Beach Party movies. But I'm not sure I ever forgave him for chasing Candy.

We never laughed at Buster Keaton as the old man chasing her. It was coarse slapstick with sound effects, and maybe it wasn't even meant to be funny. Maybe it was just a way to get back to the plot. What else would you do with a character like Candy? What do you do when you've flattened everybody, and there's nobody left to dance with?

I remember being in love with Frankie Avalon, and I wanted him and Candy to go

for kisses on the beach. But Frankie always ended up with Annette Funicello, who was kind of serious and always got angry with Frankie over some misunderstanding... "Frankie - you were supposed to meet me at the Cabana this afternoon! I'm not talking to you any more!" "Oh come on, honey! The Big Race was this afternoon!" and so on. They seemed desperate to pretend to be like married people.

Fun and danger

Candy never had arguments or boring discussions relevant only to the plot. Candy's motor was stronger than the one in Frankie's convertible. She was the fastest, shiniest, blondest thing on the beach. She was gorgeous and her dress was gorgeous. She had more fun than anybody, while it lasted, and everybody was knocked out by her. But it was dangerous to have so much fun, because there was always an old man watching - someone who wasn't a teenager, and didn't know how to frug. I wonder if my sister and I ever thought about what would happen to Candy if the old man caught her. Those were the secrets of the Beach Party movies - those uncatchable secrets - Candy's shimmy, the invisible force of her hip thrust, the beach, what it felt like to kiss somebody.

So from Beach Blanket Bingo, and from all the sexy movies on television after school and before dinner and homework in the late 60s, my sister and I decided that the most exciting person to be was the girl who shakes. We went out into the streets, lifted our arms and shook. We thrust our hips out at the boys playing football. We screamed hysterically. They ignored us. Someday, I thought, I'll have the right dress.

Forgotten man

Peter Matthews

Reflections in a Male Eye: John Huston and the American Experience

Gaylyn Studlar and David Desser (eds),
Smithsonian Institution Press,
£31.25 (hb), £12.50 (pb), 311pp

James Agee once described John Huston as having the air of a "highly intelligent cowboy", his lean, pugilistic features curiously inflected by a voice rich, gentle and distinctly cultivated. The tension fascinated Agee, who saw in it the basis of a camera style at once virile and humane, which gave its preferred subjects – flawed adventurers and crooks – a tether sufficiently long to hang themselves, yet never refused the precise moral interest due to them as individuals. But that was in 1950, when Huston was still riding high with *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Almost immediately, he would embark on a series of ambitious misfires (*Moulin Rouge*, *Moby Dick*, *Freud*) which tainted his clean, selfless technique with 'art'; he gambled, lost and thereafter seemed to join the forgotten men he so frequently portrayed.

In the atmosphere of failed promise, Andrew Sarris could plausibly dismiss Huston as little more than a clumsy craftsman with an unfortunate propensity for ideas. For all his swagger, the maverick had clay feet: the limp ironies and cosmic laughter with which he larded his tales of masculine striving showed only how incapable he was of taking the action ethos straight. Similarly, Huston's insistence on honouring the spirit of his literary sources betrayed his essential dilettantism, unstamped by a firm creative personality. Less than a man then, and perhaps also less than an American. The Huston who fled Hollywood and set up as a phony Irishman and English country gentleman had, his critics charged, let himself slip out of the national mainstream. Even the sense of tragic waste that blighted much of his career seemed faintly un-American, so when Sarris eventually revised his estimate upwards, he still had to confess that this sour chronicler of defeat just wasn't for him.

If Huston was vilified by the auteur critics of the 60s, he was simply ignored by the film theorists of the 70s and 80s. With almost antithetical agendas, both groups prized genre – yet here was a director whose work careered crazily from epic (*The Bible*) to spy spoof (*Casino Royale*) to family musical (*Annie*). Authorial personality or the lack thereof has, in any case, been irrelevant to most theory, since until recently it regarded the very notion of a spontaneous subject as hopelessly illusory and idealist. Studlar's and Desser's anthology is the more welcome in that it attempts – partially and with mixed success – to wrestle free from the deadening grip of structural determinism. Nearly all the contributors treat Huston not merely as the reflex of this or that ideological formation or institutional setting, but as an artist with specific traits whose films can be distinguished, argued over, liked or disliked.

That's already a considerable advance, even if in practice few of the articles go beyond baby's first steps in mapping the personal on to the political. It may be that



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2)

film theory is just too codified in its habits or inflexible in its language to bring off this admittedly tricky synthesis – but really, good intentions are not enough. You have to groan when Virginia Wright Wexman uses Huston's taste in riding clothes to eke out a case for his cultural imperialism or when Stephen Cooper, by an even sillier argument, relates the desaturated reds of *Reflections in a Golden Eye* to "the bloody perversions being wreaked on Vietnam". That, unfortunately, is about par for a book that alternates historical with biographical cliché, then ties up its dangling ends with theoretical cliché.

The main exceptions are those relatively modest essays that do no more than provide solid information (Gary Edgerton on the war documentaries) or range appreciatively over a movie the writer obviously loves (James Naremore on *The Maltese Falcon*). But it was a tactical error for the editors to employ what they call a "multivocal" approach, juxtaposing the scholarly material with an interview, a couple of short stories and a handful of the more celebrated journalistic pieces on Huston. You can't help noticing how mechanical and frigid even the best academic criticism looks alongside the most talented impressionistic prose. The Agee profile especially, in its breadth of allusion and beautiful delicacy of touch, has exactly that quality of mental elasticity one misses almost everywhere else.

Of course, film theory must conform to its own rules and conventions, but if it is going to delve into the mystery of a human personality at all, it had better show itself capable of respecting it. The rambunctious but strangely recessive Huston you glimpse in the interview and in occasional sardonic asides is already too complicated an animal to be pinned down by the terms of a 'masculinity' debate. And yet, for all its ungainly writing and pseudo-complexity of thought,

this is an exceedingly hopeful volume. One remarks in at least a few of the articles the steady trickling of a new vocabulary: words like courage, honesty, integrity, compassion, even faith and trust. These are not much more than tokens, but the refusal of both inverted commas and apologies is a pleasure to see.

Heritage of horror

Kim Newman

Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film

Peter Hutchings, Manchester University Press, £35 (hb), £10.99 (pb), 193pp

In *All Our Yesterdays*, Julian Petley labelled a fantastical area of British cinema "the Lost Continent", striking an apt metaphor and borrowing the title of a Hammer film. The opportunity remains for the film academic equivalent of Professor Challenger to mount an expedition to the vaults and return with a fuller understanding of the region. David Pirie's *A Heritage of Horror* provides evidence of a previous excursion, and anyone venturing, like Peter Hutchings, in search of the British horror film inevitably finds the marks of Pirie's enquiries littering the route.

The achievement of Pirie's 1973 study was not only to counter a trend in horror criticism which ignored films made after 1945 or outside Hollywood, but to systematise a complex area into sub-generic or auteurist compartments, distinguishing, for example, between an Amicus omnibus and a modish, post-generic picture, or between a Hammer *Dracula* by Terence Fisher and a Hammer *Dracula* by Freddie Francis. Subsequently, it has been impossible to resort to the saw – mercilessly evoked by Hutchings, who quotes the patronising, contradictory and downright silly remarks



Chronicler of defeat: John Huston (above) gave his flawed adventurers and crooks in films such as 'The Maltese Falcon' (opposite) a moral ambiguity which went against the grain of American heroism

of the national press of the day – that all horror films are the same.

Hammer and Beyond, though slender enough to suggest that the last two words might be dropped from the title, is strongest when contextualising British horror in the critical climate of its times, particularly in the *Peeping Tom*-style study of the press reception of *The Curse of Frankenstein*. It is incredible that in 1957, professional critics who presumably had been paying attention treated the first genuine Hammer horror as if it were the dozenth, not only failing to notice that there hadn't been a Frankenstein film for nearly ten years, but also that there had never been a British period horror film, in colour, with a serious tone. Even those who liked the movie (not actually one of Hammer's greats) didn't seem to realise it was a radical break with the (predominantly American) history of the horror film, and the birth, after decades of parturition marked by *Dead of Night* on one hand and *Tod Slaughter* on the other, of a national tradition.

Hutchings states early that he intends to examine British horror for specific social and psychological references. His account of the development of the Hammer tradition in the 50s is astute in its linking of films such as the Quatermass series to headlines of the time (perhaps as much attributable to Nigel Kneale's canny extrapolations as to company policy), suggesting how *The Mummy* in 1959 might relate to anti-Egyptian feelings in the wake of Suez. However, this approach recedes as the book progresses – Michael Reeves' films are discussed not in the context of the late 60s but in terms of fathers – and Hutchings concentrates on psychology, and almost exclusively on the persistent themes of patriarchy and paternalism.

Certainly, the typical Hammer film (that is, one directed by Terence Fisher, written by Jimmy Sangster or John Elder and starring Peter Cushing and/or Christopher Lee) pits good and evil fathers against each other, with younger characters' corruption or survival serving as a way of keeping score. For all their lurid liveliness, the early Hammer films upheld the rule of the decent patriarch. Hutchings isolates the strain that set in around the mid-60s, exemplified by ineffectual fathers in ineffectual films such as *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* and *The Mummy's Shroud*, and carries it through to the rejection of overwhelmingly evil or misguided parental figures in the films of Michael Reeves or Hammer offshoots such as *Hands of the Ripper* and *Demons of the Mind*. Between the lines of this analysis can be read the notion that this obsessive theme might have to do with the relationship between the fathers (James Carreras, Will Hinds) who founded Hammer and the sons (Michael Carreras, John Elder) who shaped its output, with 'fallen father' films predominating as power shifts to the younger generation.

In concentrating on the 'typical' Hammer film, Hutchings tends to see the crisis point as coming with Fisher's *The Gorgon*. I've always found this film rather staid and unsatisfactory beside John Gilling's *The Reptile*, which also centres on an unwittingly monstrous woman and a tormented father, and *The Plague of the Zombies*, which is more explicitly political (Wilsonite?) than Fisher's *Dracula* films in its depiction of the ex-

ploitation of the peasant dead by the aristocratic living. In upholding Fisher, Hutchings tends to leave out Gilling, Don Sharp and other interesting film-makers, finding – like Pirie before him – a problem in dealing with the occasional extraordinary works not locatable within directorial careers.

Indeed, Hutchings rarely ventures off the track to find the truly lost areas of British cinema, such as that spiky, hard-to-see, hard-to-take layer represented by Peter Walker or such disreputable oddities as *The Corpse* and *Symptoms* which offer a cynically grotty vision of British life in the 60s and 70s. The battle for Hammer has been won, to the extent that the national press now uses the studio as a stick to beat Clive Barker with just as they used Val Lewton to abuse Hammer. But the lost continent – which includes the 1934 'lost world' movie *Secret of the Loch* and the most obscure Hammer *Prehistoric Women* – is still *terra incognita*.

Life's a cabaret

Lorraine Gamman

Divine Decadence: Fascism, Female Spectacle and the Makings of Sally Bowles

Linda Mizejewski, Princeton University Press, £25 (hb), £10.95 (pb), 261pp

As a naive teenager in the early 70s I remember being shocked, as well as excited, by Liza Minnelli's performance as Sally Bowles in Bob Fosse's film *Cabaret*. It wasn't just that I was captivated by the spectacle of Minnelli belting out unforgettable torch songs à la Dietrich in top hat, black boots and gartered stockings, while simultaneously performing weird sexual routines with men dressed as women who pretended to be Nazis (I'd only seen this sort of thing before in porn magazines that I sneaked a look at). What I remember most about my first viewing of *Cabaret* was the dark green nail polish (this was pre-punk, after all) Minnelli flashed to the camera with a cry of "Divine decadence, darling". And the implication of the plot that Sally's promiscuity led to heartbreak, emotional decay and, incidentally, the rise of Fascism.

I was still a sexual and cultural virgin

Grave predicament: the critical consensus on what constitutes a typical Hammer film ignores stylish and atmospheric movies such as John Gilling's 'The Plague of the Zombies'



and had no idea that the originator of the story, Christopher Isherwood, was a literary figure (albeit an unorthodox one), but I delighted in the characters of Sally, Brian and even Max. Yet I knew something wasn't quite right about the suggestion that sexual excess led to the political excesses of Nazism. So 20 years later I was gratified to see Linda Mizejewski's book, which at first sight appeared to refute any simple reading of Isherwood's stories in *Goodbye to Berlin*, published in 1939.

The 'Sally Bowles' story became the subject of four stage productions as well as the more famous film version. Mizejewski's analysis of the texts that have evolved from Isherwood's original uses both empirical sources and psychoanalytic concepts to get to grips with the Sally Bowles character, both as female spectacle and as the product of historically specific interpretations of Nazism. She persuasively argues that the cinema-loving Isherwood literally connects German Fascism and the motion picture camera in the famous sentence from 'A Berlin Diary': "I am a camera with its shutters open, quite passive, recording not thinking," which she suggests sets up from the start a problematic relationship between the "objective" (male) camera eye and woman.

This problematic relationship has to do with debates about realism. Many feminist critics have warned against the elision of Isherwood's fictional writing style with documentary technique. These warnings are apt, since the journalist Jean Ross, who allegedly inspired Isherwood in Berlin in the 30s, is often conflated with the fictional character Sally Bowles. Sarah Caldwell, Jean Ross' daughter, has protested about the comparison between her accomplished mother, who was a political activist and in the course of a distinguished career wrote about the Spanish Civil War, Vietnam and nuclear disarmament among other things, and Isherwood's rather sad creation. Mizejewski assesses these debates, pointing out that caricature is not surprising, not only because realism is always impossible, but because "In each of the five Sally Bowles texts the male writer/authority confronts the woman who operates as body and spectacle, without a reliable or meaningful language of her own."

Mizejewski also takes up ideas about the male gaze developed by feminist film theorists. Her point is not simply that Isherwood's homosexual gaze constructs woman as spectacle to encourage heterosexual voyeurism or to subvert or draw attention away from the gay subtext. She acknowledges that Minnelli in *Cabaret* presents a grotesque homovestite spectacle (and perhaps the idea that femininity is artificial, simply a masquerade) but argues that this spectacle cannot be understood without reference to the juxtaposed spectacle of Nazism. The violent and visually provocative parallel Nazi scenes, she claims, discomfit the spectator. The figure of woman against the political backdrop necessitates "a disavowal of pleasure on some level – a narrative punishment of the showgirl, a qualification of pleasurable spectacle as 'decadence'."

We are left wondering what exactly Mizejewski means by "decadence". Referring to Isherwood, she draws attention to the repressions in *Goodbye to Berlin*. In the ►

◀ 70s, Isherwood himself looked back on his pre-war writings and experiences in *Christopher and His Kind*, filling in many of the gaps and ambiguities about what "decadence" meant to him from a perspective more aware of sexual politics. Mizejewski acknowledges these revisionist accounts while recognising the attendant problems of subjectivity described by Gore Vidal as Isherwood's "beautiful inventions of himself". But she is strangely reticent about her own feminist appropriation of the term. Her use of it as a metaphor for transgression does not completely transcend connotations of decline and decay and she fails to challenge ideas about decadence which have permeated critical readings of *Cabaret*. Nor does she explain the contradictory meaning of the oxymoron "divine decadence" and why it, and ironic sexual language generally, has resonance for her.

Despite the thorough scholarly grounding of Mizejewski's arguments, many questions remain unanswered. In particular, her analysis of the political consequences of sexual excess and her account of Nazism, homoeroticism and homosexuality could do with further discussion. It is also disappointing that there is little celebration of either Isherwood's genius or Fosse's film, which is the most significant of the adaptations. *Cabaret* still manages to disturb the spectator, despite our post-Madonna familiarity with its *mise en scène*.

Nevertheless, *Divine Decadence* is welcome – though it comes from the other side of the Atlantic. As Gore Vidal observed, the relative neglect of Isherwood's work in this country suggests that he has never been forgiven by the literary establishment for emigrating to the US on the eve of the Second World War.

For art's sake

Alan Woods

Art and Artists on Screen

John A. Walker, Manchester University Press, £40 (hb), £12.99 (pb), 226pp

Walker has chosen a potentially fascinating subject. Cinema is the perfect medium through which to explore the relationships between photography and painting, artist and motif, reality and hyperreality, genuine and fake. Tableaux have appeared frequently in films, naively reflecting or knowingly mocking the assumption – to be found in its purest form in the waxwork exhibits described by Eco in *Travels in Hyperreality* – that paintings simply record what the artist has in front of him. (Rarely, in Hollywood, her.) The Pygmalion myth, which haunts art theory and criticism from Pliny onwards, has been explored in all its irresistible vulgarity at all levels, from Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* to its Gothic reversal in *House of Wax*. Furthermore, that most pathetic of bio-pic and documentary fallacies, the idea that by watching the artist at work one can better understand the artwork, has some degree of credibility in the visual arts. Walker suggests the dangers involved in accepting Hans Namuth's and Henri-Georges Clouzot's films of Pollock and Picasso at work as straightforward records of creation, and Steven Campbell mischievously deconstructed the genre in the 1986 *Arena* documentary, *Two Artists*



Amazed. Nevertheless, the physical processes of creation in the visual arts have an afterlife within their meanings in ways that writers' rituals do not.

Certain of these themes surface fitfully in Walker's unimaginative account of art and artists in cinema. But they are explored with neither rigour nor flair. The book is divided into four sections: bio-pics of real artists; films about fictional artists and architects; artists' films and art documentaries on film; and, in a catch-all section, artworks, dealers and critics in films, and the artist in Hollywood. Walker limits himself to English-language films, thereby suicidally restricting the range of his study. To discuss the trashy movies featured in the first two sections without mention of Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* is pointless. (Tarkovsky's use of paintings and reproductions in *Nostalgia* – Piero – and *The Sacrifice* – Leonardo – are outside Walker's self-imposed brief.) Moreover, he breaks his own rule to include a full chapter on a French film, *Camille Claudel*, and he discusses – in relation to *Spellbound*, since Dalí worked on both – *Un Chien Andalou*.

Nor is the trawl of English-language examples comprehensive. There is nothing on *F Is for Fake*, for example, nor any mention, let alone discussion, of Russell's *Savage Messiah*. Yet a film on Gauguin by the Danish director Henning Carlsen which has never been shown in Britain, even on television, gets a chapter to itself.

Walker's analyses are plodding, cliché-laden and often imprecise, clumsy and self-contradictory. He never gathers up the history of Van Gogh in cinema, concentrating on *Lust for Life*. He never sketches the wider framework of bio-pics of other artists such as musicians or writers. Raising the question of historical accuracy (despite a solemn warning against the limitations inherent in the genre – "a perfect reproduction of the past is an impossible ideal"; Van Gogh, unlike Kirk Douglas, "did not speak English

Bowled over: Liza Minnelli and Michael York in Bob Fosse's 'Cabaret', the most significant of the many adaptations of Isherwood's stories of decadence in 30s Berlin

with an American accent") yields few insights, and at least one howler: Charles V, not the Pope, picked up a brush for Titian, not Michelangelo. It makes little sense to contrast Korda's *Rembrandt* with Gary Schwartz's "immensely detailed and scholarly text" *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings*, especially after suggesting that the main difference between novelists such as Irving Stone and scholarly biographers is that novelists invent dialogue and art historians do not. A straightforward contrast between mass and elitist culture is ruined by comparing visiting a cinema to owning a picture; in fact it is cheaper and easier to study art history in galleries than film history in cinemas. Walker combines politically correct asides with the suggestion that Isabelle Adjani's beauty makes her unconvincing as a sculptor "engage[d] in the tiring and dirty work of carving and modelling".

Discussion of Greenaway is restricted to *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *The Belly of an Architect*, since these films both have an artist as a central character. Yet all of Greenaway's films are steeped in and structured by painting, and *A Zed & Two Noughts* is much concerned with forgery and the mirroring of painting by photography. Nor does Walker pick up on explicit references; he notes that the drawings in *The Draughtsman's Contract* may contain clues to a murder, but not the parallel with *Blow-Up*; he fails to mention that Caspasian, Kronkite's enemy in *The Belly of an Architect*, specialises in Piranesi, providing a central set of visual, narrative and conceptual oppositions.

Walker's conclusions regarding mainstream cinema's myth-making, its concentration on white, male, dead, misunderstood European geniuses, are predictable, while the narrow focus of this study leaves its subject still barely examined.

Time and motion

Philip Kemp

Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)

Marta Braun, University of Chicago Press, £51.95, 450pp

Etienne-Jules Marey: A Passion for the Trace

François Dagognet, Zone Books/MIT Press, £24.25, 204pp

Pre-Cinema History: An Encyclopedia and Annotated Bibliography of the Moving Image before 1896

Hermann Hecht, Ann Hecht (ed), Bowker Saur, £99, 476pp

With the centenary of cinema almost upon us, it's easy to assume that the nineteenth-century pioneers whose researches gave birth to the medium had no other aim in mind – as though all their work found its desired apotheosis in Lumière, Méliès, Griffith and the latest Schwarzenegger slamfest. But not all of them, by a long way, would have seen it like that. To Etienne-Jules Marey – who has as good a claim as anyone to the much disputed title Father of the Cinema – the movies were an irrelevance, an inconsequential side product of his life's work.

Medically trained, Marey started out as a physiologist. He found the science in its infancy and largely subjective: if a doctor, however skilled, took a pulse, how could he convey his exact findings to a colleague or

record them for future reference? Only machines would serve; and since they didn't exist, Marey – an inspired *bricoleur*, as Marta Braun describes him, with a genius for gadgetry – set out to make them himself. His first instrument, the sphygmograph, registered the fluctuations of the pulse and recorded them as a trace on smoke-blackened paper – the direct ancestor of the electrocardiogram.

From measuring the inner workings of the body, Marey became ever more fascinated by its outer mechanisms: the study of movement in time that he saw as the language of life itself. Set on capturing “the most fleeting, most delicate and most complex movements, which no language could ever express” – not just the gait of a man or the gallop of a horse but the flight of birds and even insects – he made increasing use of photography, progressing from single shots to multiple images taken split seconds apart to the inevitable goal of moving pictures themselves.

Others, more showmanlike or more acquisitive – Lumière, Eastman, Edison – pounced avidly on Marey's inventions. He himself remained indifferent and even faintly puzzled by the craze for his disreputable offspring. “Cinema produces only what the eye can see in any case. It adds nothing to the power of our sight, nor does it remove its illusions, and the real character of a scientific method is to supplant the inefficiency of our senses and correct their errors.” Fiction, to Marey, merely substituted new illusions for the old ones.

In the reference books Marey is usually linked with his exact contemporary, Eadweard Muybridge. The two shared a passion for capturing movement on film and influenced each other's work, but Braun is at pains to distance Marey – “disinterested, accurate, analytic and systematic” – from the hucksterish Muybridge, whom she suspects of fiddling his results. She gives a lucid and engaging account of Marey's work, backed by impressive documentation – listing not only Marey's numerous publications, but all his extant negatives and films. By way of a coda, she traces his intellectual legacy in diverse fields: photography, epidemiology, ergonomics, physical education and aeronautics. (Marey devised the first wind-tunnel, and Wilbur Wright cited his *Animal Mechanism* as a prime influence.) Though pricey, Braun's book is impeccably produced and lavishly illustrated with Marey's elegant, intricate machines and the strikingly stylised “chronophotography” that inspired Duchamp and the Italian Futurists.

It's hard luck on François Dagognet that his book on Marey should have coincided with Braun's. Covering much the same ground but far more sketchily, *A Passion for the Trace* skates over all the detail that makes the longer book so vivid and – paradoxically – so much less taxing to read. By comparison, Dagognet's illustrations seem sparse and his documentation skimpy, baldly asserting where Braun demonstrates and expounds. It doesn't help that he (or his translator) writes in a stilted, lecture-hall style (“I thus begin a long and difficult examination...”) strewn with unappealing jargon. Braun's book may cost twice as much, but there's no question which offers better value.

Marey features prominently – and quite

rightly, too – in *Pre-Cinema History*. In fact he features in over 70 entries, and there's the problem. The book calls itself ‘An Encyclopedia and Annotated Bibliography’, but only the latter is true. There's all the raw material here for a magnificent encyclopedia – if someone would take the trouble to compile it. As things stand, it's rather like arriving at a good restaurant to be faced with a heap of first-rate produce and a recipe book.

Pre-Cinema History, as Ann Hecht explains in her preface, is the realisation of a bibliography assembled over a period of 30 years by the late Hermann Hecht, and left unfinished at his death in 1985. Its scope is stupendous. The earliest entry dates from 1342 – the Latin translation of a Hebrew manuscript describing a camera obscura, written by its supposed inventor, Levi ben Gershon – and the most recent from 1986. In between come technical studies of optics, applications for patents, excerpts from diaries and letters, newspaper and magazine articles, acts of parliament, handbills, and accounts of the host of magic lanterns, zoetropes, phantasmagorias, myrioramas, phenakistoscopes and other ingenious precursors of the emergent cinematograph. Publications in English, French and German are covered (though there's not a lot of information from Italy). Hecht even includes fictional references, such as Dickens' sketch of a magic-lantern show from *The Cricket on the Hearth* and the sinister children's entertainment staged in M. R. James' *Casting the Runes*.

Each work is summarised, and often quoted at length. Key publications, such as Harting's *Das Mikroskop* (1866), receive exhaustive précis long enough to qualify as essays in their own right – which, as David Robinson notes in his foreword, are “livelier, very often, than the original work to which they refer”. In the quality, quantity and range of information it offers, Hecht's achievement is awesome – which only serves to make the deficiencies of its presentation all the more infuriating.

Had he lived, Hecht would undoubtedly have tidied up his numbering system. Since this, “because of the problems of crossreferencing... proved impracticable”, we're faced with an awkward and confusing morass of digits: 134, 134/1, 134AB, 134A/l and so on, each referring to a different subject. Some numbers have no entry, others are used twice. In the index, key references are supposed to be in bold type – but this happens rarely, and not at all in the name index, so unfortunately, anybody investigating Marey will have to chase up every one of those 70-odd numbers. Most damaging of all is the stinginess with illustrations: a paltry eight plates, tucked away behind the list of abbreviations.

What this book cries out for is a companion volume: the encyclopedia that this claims to be but isn't, with its whole rich mass of material reorganised into entries cross-indexed to each other and to the bibliography. The price of the pair would be horrendous, but as a library resource (which at nearly £100 the present volume is anyway fated to be) they would be invaluable. As it is, *Pre-Cinema History* can be recommended as sheer delight to browsers with time on their hands – but to hard-pressed scholars and researchers it's likely to be more frustrating than useful.

JFK: The Book of the Film

Screenplay by Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar, Applause Books, £12.99, 593pp
The annotated screenplay for *JFK*, which details scene by scene Stone's research into the Kennedy assassination, is accompanied by a section titled ‘The JFK Debate: Reactions and Commentaries’. The latter presents responses to the movie from political analysts, reporters and social commentators across the US, incorporating even the film's most vehement detractors. Historical documents, complete credits and bibliography combine to make this a superior example of tie-in publishing.

Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash

Andrew Horton (ed), Cambridge University Press, £27.95, 171pp
This collection of original essays by Russian and American scholars covers satirical films from the 20s to the recent glasnost period. Films discussed include *The Miracle Worker* (apparently Lenin's favourite movie), *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*, which lampoons 20s movie madness, Medvedkin's surreal spoof of farm life, *Happiness*, and Kuleshov's classic *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*.

Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939

Tino Balio, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$65, 483pp
The fifth volume in the monumental series *History of the American Cinema*, this weighty tome examines the period during which the Hollywood studio system was at its strongest, and which culminated in the production of classic masterpieces such as *Gone with the Wind* (below), *The Wizard of Oz* and *Stagecoach*. Balio examines in exhaustive detail the ways in which the industry matured into a modern business enterprise, controlling every aspect of the film-making process from planning stage to reception. Guest contributors fill out the picture with analyses of censorship (Richard Maltby), technology and “classical” Hollywood style (David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson), B movies (Brian Taves), documentary films (Charles Wolfe) and the avant-garde (Jan-Christopher Horak).



Casablanca: As Time Goes By

Frank Miller, Virgin, £12.99, 224pp
This paperback edition of the book commemorating the cult classic's 50th birthday last year reveals the inside stories of the production, demonstrating how a series of accidents brought together the script, director and stars which created the definitive romantic thriller. Lavishly illustrated in colour and black and white, the book also includes a bibliography and index.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

Baraka

USA 1992

Director: Ron Fricke

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Mayfair Entertainment

Production Company

Magidson Films

Producer

Mark Magidson

Pre-production

Co-ordinator

Shelly Palmer

Production Co-ordinator

Linda Giella

Location Research

Robin Smith

Location Co-ordinators

Australia:

Michael Scott Davis

Brazil:

Neon Rio

Dudu Contintino

Flavio Somogyi

Cambodia:

Michael Freeman

Chhay Heng

Ministry of Foreign

Affairs Press

Department

China:

Yang Hua Dong

China Film

Co-production

Corporation

Jia Qi

Ren Yafei

Ecuador:

Trans Galapagos Inc

Carlos Saavedra

Orlando Falco

Egypt:

Media International

Centre/Mic

Magdi Youssef

Alaf Fawzy

France:

Why Not Productions

Marcel Castera Kahn

Hawaii:

Teamwork

Communications/Maui

Barry Rivers

Hong Kong:

Salon Films (H.K.) Ltd

John Lamond Jnr

India:

Mohamed Shafi

Indonesia:

Lorne Blair

Laurence Blair

Iran:

Amir Esfandiari

Jalal Khosroshahi

Shahram Asgari

Israel:

The El Raz Company

Zvika Haen

Italy:

A & C Communication

S.R.L.

Carlo Timpanaro

Japan:

Virgin Earth Inc

BeBe Hiroko Ishikawa

Junko Ogura

Kennedy Taylor

William Word

Kenya:

Cineset Productions

Jimmy Mukora

Robin Hurt Safaris

Mouse McConnell

Kuwait:

Omar Productions

Farouq Abdulaziz

Nepal:

Thomas Laird

New York:

Mel Lawrence

Poland:

Elzbieta Pyrich

The World Monitor

Thailand:

Kamonwan

Sonsomsock Wilson

Turkey:

Istanbul Film Agency

Fatih Aksoy

Post-production

Supervisor

Alton Walpole

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Gay Browning

Original Treatment

Genevieve Nicholas

Constantine Nicholas

Ron Fricke

Concepts & Scenario

Ron Fricke

Mark Magidson

Bob Green

Director of Photography

Ron Fricke

In colour

70mm

Consultants:

Richard Vetter

Lee Parker

Video Consultation

Sarah Gartner

Miguel Grunstein

Video Effects

The Post House

Editors

Ron Fricke

Mark Magidson

David E. Aubrey

Additional:

Alton Walpole

Music

Michael Stearns

Music Research

Grant Wakefield

Music Extracts

"Sanya", "Honshirabe"

performed by

Kohachiro Miyata;

"Mantra" from

"Mantra/Stabat Mixer"

by Somei Satoh;

"African Journey"

from "Exotic Dance"

by and performed

by Anugama &

Sebastiano; "Rainbow

Voice" from "On

Hearing Solar Winds"

by the Harmonic

Choir/David Hykes;

"Wandering Saint"

from "Expressions

of Impressions" by

and performed by

L. Subramaniam;

"Host of Serafim" by

and performed by

Dead Can Dance; "Drovela"/

"Wipala" from "Land

of Incas" by Gonzalo

Vargos; "Triste"

by Ciro Hurtado,

performed by

Ciro Hurtado,

Julio Ledezma,

Cindy Harding, Libby

Harding; "An Daorach

Sheag" performed

by Brother,

Hamish Richardson,

Angus Richardson,

Fergus Richardson;

"The Offerings for

General Protectors",

"A Prayer of Kala Rupa",

"A Traditional

Composition for Gya

Ling, Dung Chen" from

"Sacred Ceremonies"

performed by The

Monks of the Dip

Tse Ling Monastery

Title Design

Michael D. Gibson

Opticals

The Chandler Group

Imagica

End Credit

Pacific Title

"Kecak" Audio Production

and Editing

Miguel Rivera

Location Sound Recordists

Michael Stearns

David Brownlow

Alton Walpole

Bruce Simballa

Bill Mitchell

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve Smith

Sound Transfers

Tom Sherlock

Robert Jansen

Jeffrey Payne

David Lomino

Joe Piantadosi

Sound Effects Design

John Morris

Sound Effects Editor

John Joseph Thomas

Foley Artists

Margie O'Malley

Jennifer Myers

Foley Engineers

Eric Thompson

Michael Semanick

Concept Consultants

Ruth Strassberg

Peter Russell

Post-production

Consultant

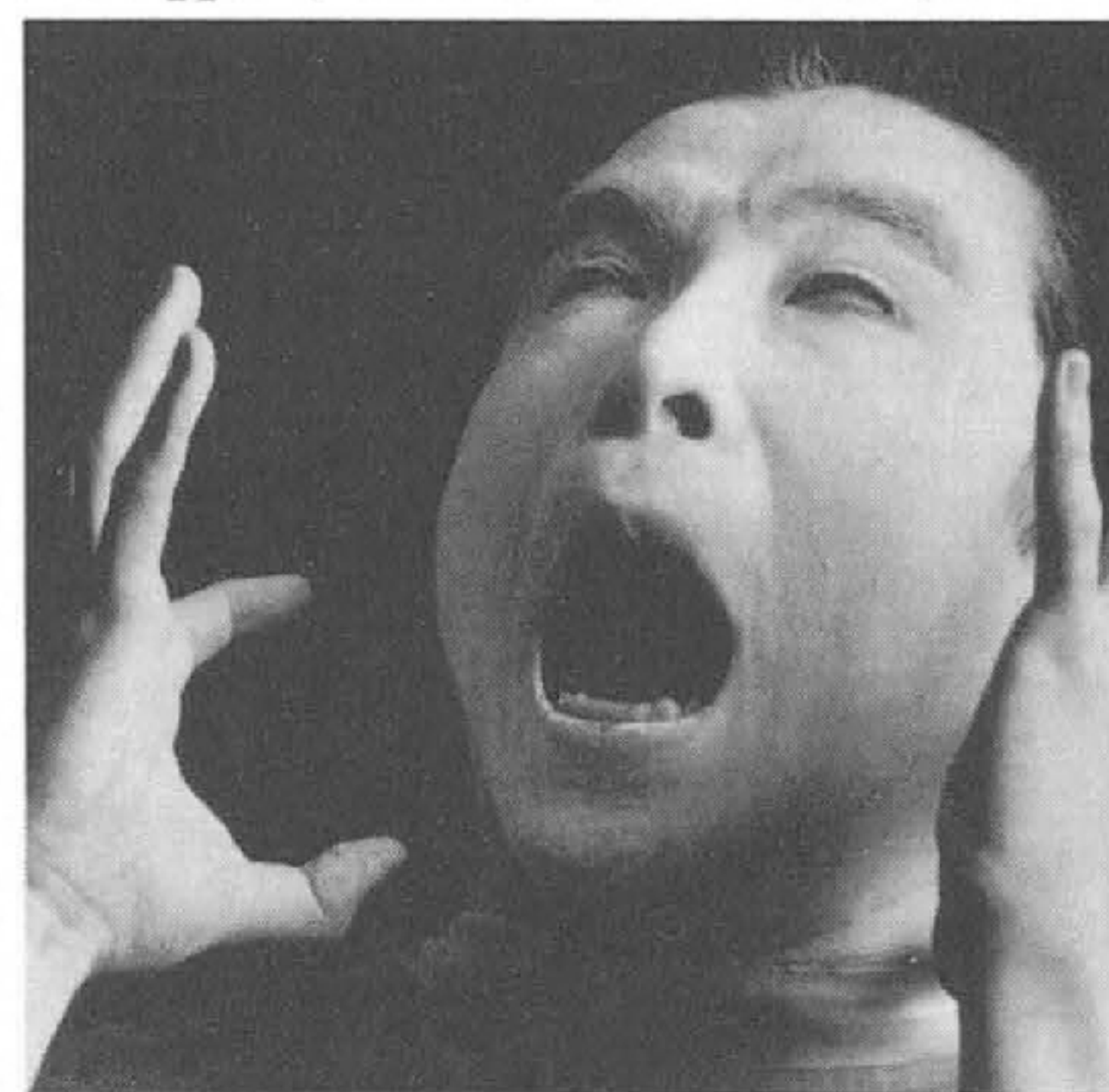
David Bartholomew

8,708 feet

97 minutes

A montage of documentary footage from around the world begins with a group of monkeys splashing in steaming volcanic baths in the Himalayas. Shots of the night sky follow, giving way to a sequence of devotional images: Buddhist monks, a Japanese zen garden, Jerusalem's Wailing Wall and some whirling Dervishes. Volcanic landscapes are followed by a visit to Ayers Rock, African tribal dances are followed by scenes of deforestation, apparently watched by a Polynesian chieftain. The technological world is represented by images of dynamite, shanty towns, a factory farm where day-old chicks pour off conveyor belts. The doors of offices revolve in a fast-motion blur. Amid the bustle of a Tokyo street, a Zen monk moves with slow, heel-to-toe steps. Street children beg in Brazilian gutters, women labour in an Indonesian cigarette factory. Shots of burning oil wells in Kuwait are followed by the Basra road and the debris - human and otherwise - left by the retreating Iraqi army. In Auschwitz and in Cambodia, the faces of Nazi and Khmer Rouge victims stare out from sheets of photographs. The film visits the funeral pyres along the Ganges, looks upon ruined temples, a solar eclipse and the tiny tomb where Christ was reputedly buried. In Japan, a monk carefully floats a flower and a candle on a small pool of water.

Baraka follows in a long tradition of films that use pictures and music to make implicit, profound and sometimes portentous statements about how we live and die in the world. Notable recent examples of such narrationless narrative are *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Powaqqatsi*, the two extant films in God-



Blessings, breath and the essence of life

frey Reggio's planned trilogy of collaborations with composer Philip Glass. The third, as yet unmade, film, *Naqqoyqatsi*, similarly takes its title from a word in the Hopi language, meaning something like "life is a state of war". However, it now looks as though Ron Fricke, Reggio's cinematographer on *Koyaanisqatsi*, has pipped *Naqqoyqatsi* at the post.

Like Reggio's films, *Baraka* takes its theme from human diversity: the things we do to each other and to the world. Not to be outdone by Reggio's espousal of the Hopi language, Fricke has named his film with an ancient Sufi word which crams a meaning encompassing blessings, breath and the essence of life into three short syllables. Unsurprisingly, *Baraka* is a huge film, filmed in 24 countries and six continents; it took Fricke 14 months to assemble his footage. Specially adapted 70mm cameras make much of it breathtakingly beautiful. At times *Baraka* comes over as an animated *National Geographic*.

Baraka is a very green film. The modern world is represented as a violent place filled with alienated populations who ride subways and probably eat the factory-farmed chickens that we see in one of the film's longest, most shocking scenes. The implicit message is apparently that the raison d'être of the technological age is one of systematic destruction. Urban man has neither the literal horizons of the Buddhist monks halfway up the Himalayas, nor the spiritual ones afforded by any transcendental strategy. The Tokyo commuters barely notice the monk who uses the same street for an exquisitely slow walking meditation. Fricke's images of whirling Dervishes have a stillness that is simply beautiful.

Of *Baraka*'s soundtrack there is less to say. Although sound and image are carefully edited, Fricke does not have his own composer scoring the entire film, and consequently loses *Koyaanisqatsi*'s high integration of sound and image. Michael Stearns has contributed some effective original material; the rest of the music is imported (the soundtrack design favours breathy overtone chants). Considering that comparisons with Reggio's films are inevitable, Fricke made an odd decision in allowing an extended shot of a donkey, cart and mountains to be accompanied by a long organ drone which, in both key and sonority, replicates part of Glass' *Koyaanisqatsi* score.

Despite this, *Baraka* is a film of considerable impact. Part of this is to do with photography and geography alone: if the locations are not spectacular, then you can rely on the technicians getting every shot in perfect frame. But the lasting effect is more melancholic. The ruined temples of the epilogue recall the boasts of Shelley's *Ozymandias*; there are no refuges from the processes of the world. It remains to be seen whether such a conclusion is just pessimistic or, in some small way, represents a transcendental strategy of its own.

Louise Gray

Born Yesterday

USA 1993

Director: Luis Mandoki

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
In association with
Touchwood Pacific
Partners I

Executive Producer
Stratton Leopold

Producer
D. Constantine Conte

Co-producer
Stephen Traxler

Associate Producer
Chris Soldo

Production Co-ordinators
Chip Fowler
Beth Peterson
Washington:
Alison Sherman

Unit Production Manager
Lester Berman

Location Managers
Lisa Blok-Linson
Washington:
Linda Schlöss

Casting
Amanda Mackey
Cathy Sandrich
Voice:
Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors
Chris Soldo
Otie Brown
Richard Patrick
David Katz

Screenplay
Douglas McGrath
Based on the play by
Garson Kanin

Director of Photography
Lajos Koltai

Colour
Technicolor

Camera Operator
Ray de la Motte

Steadicam Operators
P. Scott Sakamoto
Randy Nolen
Washington:
Ted H. Churchill

Video Operator
Steven Mikolas

Editor
Lesley Walker

Production Designer
Lawrence G. Pauli

Art Director
Bruce Crone

Set Design
Nancy Patton
Philip Toolin

Set Decorator
Rick Simpson

Special Effects
Michael Wilmot

Music/Orchestrations
George Fenton

Music Editor
Sally Boldt

Songs
"Baby Work Out" by
Jackie Wilson, Alonzo
Tucker, performed by
Jackie Wilson; "Teach
Me Tonight" by Sammy
Cahn, Gene de Paul,
performed by (1) Dinah
Wonder; "Because" by
Dave Clark, performed
by The Dave Clark Five

Choreography
Miranda Garrison

Costume Design
Colleen Atwood

Make-up Artists
Fred Blau
Naomi Donne
Nadege Schoenfeld
Kevin Haney
Jay Cannistraci

Title Design
Nina Saxon Film
Design

Titles
CFI Title & Optical
Buena Vista Optical

Supervising Sound Editor
Bobby Mackston

Sound Editor
Dialogue:
James Matheny
Supervising ADR Editor
Joe Dorn
ADR Editors
Howell Gibbens
Mary Andrews

Foley Editor
Doug Kent

Sound Recordists
Thomas Causey
Music:
John Richards

ADR Recordists
Charlene Richards
Greg Steele

Foley Recordists
Randy Singer
Mark Harris
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
John Reitz
David Campbell
Gregg Rudloff

Supervising
Sound Effects Editor
Richard King
Sound Effects Editors
M.J. DePatie
Joel Valentine

Foley
Supervisor:
Dan O'Connell
Artists:
Hilde Hodges
Kevin Bartnof

ADR Voices
Noreen Reardon
Joanna Lipari
Joan Crosby
Anneleise Goldman
August Bach
Steve Alterman
Harvey Jason
Greg Finley
Stanley Bennett Clay
Doris Hess
Linda Phillips
Suzanne Stone
Joe Chapman
Matt Adler
Richard Penn
Vernon Scott
David McCharen

Cast
Melanie Griffith
Billie Dawn
John Goodman
Harry Brock
Don Johnson
Paul Verrall
Edward Herrmann
Ed Devery
Max Perlich
Jl
Michael Ensign
Philippe
Benjamin C. Bradlee
Secretary Duffee
Sally Quinn
Beatrice Duffee
William Frankfather
Senator Kelley
Fred Dalton Thompson
Senator Hedges
Celeste Yarnall
Mrs Hedges
Nora Dunn
Cynthia Schreiber
Meg Wittner
Mrs Kelley
William Forward
Senator Duker
Mary Gordon Murray
Bindy Duker
Ted Raimi
Cynthia's Assistant
Rondi Reed
Victoria Penny
Matthew Faison
Congressman Hulse

Kate McGregor-Stewart
Mrs Hulse
Arthur Leeds
Man at Party
John Wesley
Senator Welch
Andi Chapman
Mrs Welch
Drew Snyder
Senator Dorn
Terri Hanauer
Mrs Dorn
John Achorn
Senator Banks
Ann Hearn
Mrs Banks
Gordon Reinhart
Jewellery Store Owner
Selma Archerd
Lois
Catherine Hausman
Valerie

Freda Foh Shen
Maid
Marisol Massey
Waitress
Leroy Perry Jr
Dr Playle
Tony Palladino
Barber
Amanda Hendon
Manicurist
Fritz Sperberg
Jose Perical
Robyn Renner
Hansom Cab Driver
Paul Guyot
Bellman

9,025 feet
100 minutes

Washington DC. Millionaire Harry Brock arrives in town on confidential business accompanied by his ex-chorine girlfriend, Billie Dawn. Sensing that there is a story to uncover, journalist Paul Verrall pursues Brock, who is impressed by him. Brock and Billie attend a party at the Secretary of the Navy's mansion. To Brock's embarrassment, Billie is a laughing stock. Brock's financial manager Ed Devery believes she is a liability and advises his boss to send her back home.

Billie is invited by journalist Cynthia Schreiber to talk on a radio show and ends up looking even more foolish. Brock decides that Billie needs educating and persuades Verrall to be her tutor. Offended, Billie is initially reluctant, but changes her mind when she learns that the handsome Verrall is going to teach her. At the end of their first session, Billie makes a tentative pass at Paul which he courteously refuses. As her lessons continue, Billie proves to be an excellent pupil. She puts her new skills to the test at a party and passes with flying colours. Encouraged by Paul, she begins to take her studies seriously, getting to grips with the American constitution.

One morning, Paul arrives at Brock and Billie's hotel suite to find Brock in a meeting with six senators. When Paul questions Brock, the latter warns him off. Brock and Billie hold a dinner party for various important Washington folk, and Billie impresses them with her wit. The following day Billie turns up at the hotel and overhears Brock arguing with a senator. Suspecting that Brock is up to no good, she questions Devery about papers that she is regularly required to sign. Brock does not like her new attitude; he hits her and tells her to leave.

Billie goes to Paul and tells him about Brock's activities. They return to the hotel suite and search it for evidence. It transpires that Brock is bribing the senators to ease a deal and that all his companies are in Billie's name. Paul is pleased with the scoop and asks Billie to marry him, but before she can give him an answer, Brock turns up and Paul has to leave. Meanwhile, Brock also decides that he wants to marry Billie. She refuses him and packs her bags, telling him that Paul is about to expose the scam. Brock is most concerned about her ownership of the companies. Paul returns to the

hotel. He confronts Brock and there is an altercation. Billie tells Brock that his shady dealings will not be exposed as long as he behaves himself. She leaves with Paul.

It was a bizarre decision to remake the Garson Kanin-penned *Born Yesterday*. Few actresses could emulate, let alone eclipse, Judy Holliday's twinkling and gracious characterisation of Billie Dawn, the ultimate dumb blonde who proves to have not only a heart of gold but a high IQ. Holliday, who had played the part on Broadway, polishing it until it became completely her own, was coaxed on to the big screen by director George Cukor, whose Pygmalion complex showed both in the choice of story and his approach to actresses. Awkward, even ungainly, the beauty of Holliday's Billie was to be found in her wit. Melanie Griffith goes through the motions along with the rest of the cast, but there is no vitality in her imitation, nor even any passion in the affair with Paul Verrall, played by her husband Don Johnson.

It is left to the mighty presence of John Goodman to carry the film. But unlike Broderick Crawford, who imbued the original Brock with a touch of sympathy, so giving credibility to the fact that Billie had put up with him for so long, Goodman plays the unscrupulous millionaire as a far from cuddly character. There is a shocking viciousness about him which comes to the surface when at one point he slaps Billie's face. This ugly scene is the only one with any spark.

In spite of the irony that contemporary Hollywood has to reach into the past to find a decent role for a woman these days, Billie's turning the tables on the bimbo stereotype that still frequently finds its way into the movies has much to recommend it. Our first glimpse of Billie is of her tattooed and golden chained ankles; the first sound is of her ear-splitting screech "Harry" in broad Brooklyn twang; clearly, this woman is cheap and tacky. In her 1990s manifestation Billie Dawn is inseparable from her Walkman and her TV remote control mainlining her daily dose of soaps. She even exercises along to a fitness programme while munching her way through a bowl of M+M's.

But like Griffith's character in *Working Girl*, Billie's problem is not that she appears stupid but that she lacks class. She is white trash out of her depth in Washington society, finding that her flamboyant earrings are as much of a *faux pas* as her ill-chosen comments. In this respect, Kanin's original intention to satirise spiteful, snobbish Washington still holds, despite screenwriter Douglas McGrath's efforts to modernise the story. Paul tells Billie that there is one line that will always get her out of tight corners at cocktail parties. If in doubt, say, "That's as likely as a democrat being elected president." It's the one joke that one is happy to see fall flat.

Lizzie Francke

Champions

USA 1992

Director: Stephen Herek

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Buena Vista

Production Company
Walt Disney
In association with
Touchwood Pacific
Partners I

Producers
Jordan Kerner
Jon Avnet

Co-producers
Lynn Morgan
Martin Huberty

Production Co-ordinator
Nancy Jane King

Unit Production Manager
Lynn Morgan

Location Manager
Cat Thompson

2nd Unit Director
Micky Moore

Casting
Renée Rousselot

Assistant Directors
Douglas E. Wise
Randy Suhr
Seth Cirkier

Screenplay
Steven Brill

Director of Photography
Thomas Del Ruth

Colour
Astro Color
Prints by
Technicolor

Camera Operator
Buzz Feitschans IV

Opticals
Mercer Optical
Effects Ltd
Newspaper:
Dream Quest Images

Editors
Larry Bock
John F. Link

Production Designer
Randy Ser

Art Director
Tony Fanning

Set Design
Jack Ballance

Set Decorator
Julie Kaye Fanton

Set Dresser
Shannon Gale

Lead Scenic
Kitty Doris

Special Effects Supervisor
Paul Murphy

Music
David Newman

Orchestrations
David Newman
Randy Miller

Supervising Music Editor
Michael T. Ryan

Songs
"Hey Man" by Dennis
Hill, Joe Phillipy, Greg
Higgins, performed by
The Poorboys; "Shake
'em Down" by Steve
Van Zandt, performed
by Southside Johnny;
"Good Vibrations"
by Don Hartman,
Donnie Wahlberg,
Mark Wahlberg, Amir
Shakir, performed by
Marky Mark and the
Funky Bunch; "Ac-cent-
chu-ate the Positive"
by Harold Arlen,
Johnny Mercer,
performed by Dr John;
"We Will Rock You"
by Brian May,
performed by Queen;
"Winning It All"
by John Spinks,
performed by
The Outfield

Costume Design
Grania Preston

Wardrobe Supervisor
Lynda Foote

Make-up
Jeanne Van Phue

Titles
Buena Vista Optical

Supervising Sound Editors
Tim Chau
Louis L. Edemann

Sound Editors
Jeff Clark
Albert Gasser
Lenny Geschke
Doug Jackson
Gary Mundheim
Chuck Neely
Robert O'Brien
Kerry Williams

Supervising ADR Editor
Devon Curry

ADR Editor
Joe Mayer

Sound Recordists
Ed Novick
Music:
Tim Boyle
Bruce Botnick

ADR Recordist
David Gertz

ADR Loop Group
Mickie McGowan

Foley Recordists
Marilyn Graf
Sandra Garcia
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
John Reitz
David Campbell
Gregg Rudloff
J. Allen Hurd

Foley Artists
Kevin Bartnof
Ellen Heuer

Technical Advisers
Jack White

Stunt Co-ordinators
Ronnie Rondell
Manny Perry

Stunts
Dan Weselis
Kim Koscki
Jeannie Epper

Hockey Trainer
Jack White

Cast
Emilio Estevez
Gordon Bombay
Joss Ackland
Hans
Lane Smith
Coach Reilly
Heidi Kling
Casey
Josef Sommer
Gerald Ducksworth
Joshua Jackson
Charlie Conroy
Elden Ratliff
Fulton Reed
Shaun Weiss
Goldberg
M.C. Gaine
Lewis
Matt Doherty
Les Averman
Brandon Adams
Jesse Hall
J.D. Daniels
Peter
Aaron Schwartz
Dave Karp
Garette Ratliff Henson
Guy Germaine
Marguerite Moreau
Connie
Jane Plank
Tammy
Jussie Smollett
Terry Hall
Vincent A. Larusso
Adam Banks
Danny Tamborelli
Tommy

Michael Ooms
McGill
Casey Garven
Larson
Hal Fort Atkinson III
Philip Banks
Basil McRae
Michael Modano
Northstar Players
John Beasley
Mr Hall
Stephen Dowling
Hawks' Referee
Brock Pierce
Gordon age 10
Robert Pall
Gordon's Father
John Paul Gamoke
Mr Tolbert
Steven Brill
Frank Huddy
George Coe
Judge Weathers
Dale Dunham
Jury Foreman
Barbara Davidson
Jeannie
Brad Peterson
Cardinals' Coach
John Oliver
Cardinals' Goal
Jacqueline Kim
Jane

Garth Schumacher
Arresting Cop
Joe Howard
Court Clerk
Scott Bryan
Cardinal
Peter L. Mullin
Flames' Referee
Mark Bradley
Science Teacher
Bill Schoppert
Hawks' Official
Claudia Wilkens
Principal
Jack White
Utility Ref
Peter Syvertsen
Paramedic
Bob Miller
Announcer

9,305 feet
103 minutes

US title: *The Mighty Ducks*

Deeply affected as a child by losing the pee-wee ice hockey championship on a tiebreaker – to the disgust of his megalomaniacal coach, Reilly – Gordon Bombay has become a ruthlessly competitive Minneapolis lawyer with an aversion to hockey. Arrested for drunk driving, Gordon is sentenced to 500 hours of community service: he must coach District 5's pee-wee ice hockey team, a hopeless bunch of pre-teen misfits. To Gordon's humiliation, the first game is against his old team, the Hawks, still captained by Coach Reilly; the game is a miserable fiasco. District 5 stays on a losing streak until Gordon's old mentor Hans, a sports shop manager, reminds him that what really matters is not the winning but the taking part.

Inspired, Gordon begins to coach in earnest. He gradually earns the trust of his team, the affection of Charlie, the most sensitive kid, and the approving eye of Charlie's mom. With the sponsorship of his law firm, he buys the team new equipment and rechristens them the Ducks. But when a redistricting loophole allows him to poach the Hawks' best player, Gordon falls foul of his senior partner, Gerald Ducksworth, and loses his job with the firm. By now, however, he has given his team new pride and self-esteem. The Ducks sail through the play-offs and finally face the Hawks in the championship. Despite foul play engineered by Coach Reilly, there is a draw, and Charlie is left to hit the tiebreaking shot. Determined not to traumatise Charlie as Reilly traumatised him, Gordon tells Charlie that he believes in him – whether or not he makes the shot. Encouraged, Charlie wins the day for the Ducks. As Gordon leaves his proud Ducks to try out for the pros, he promises to return for the next season.

Things have come to a sorry pass when even Disney cannot film a cockle-warming tale of plucky inner-city youngsters triumphing over their spoiled suburban counterparts with-

out turning it into a dreary parable of redemption. Instead of focusing on the team, with all the corny humour required of the genre, *Champions* only has eyes for the coach, as the slick, soulless yuppie Gordon rediscovers the ice hockey player within.

Even this threadbare, utterly predictable formula might have been made with some sass. But Stephen Herek, who kept *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* loping goofily along, seems stumped here, unable to give the film's flat-footed Jungian clichés – the destructive father figure consumed with the desire to win, the archetypal wise old man who can see beyond the scoreboard – a trace of irony. He is not helped by Emilio Estevez's complacent performance as Gordon, or by the script: from the initial missed shot to the final winning game (to the strains of Queen's "We Are the Champions"), *Champions* (originally *The Mighty Ducks*) leaves no plot device unannounced. "Coaching will teach you a sense of compassion and fair play... It will make you a better person," Ducksworth tells Gordon, five minutes in.

For anyone over ten, the comedy is almost as thin on the ground as the suspense. In the absence of clearly defined characters or crunchy dialogue, the film-makers make do with facile, unfunny slapstick – some gratuitous scenes of kids on rollerskates knocking over middle-aged women with shopping – as if bad manners were an adequate substitute for humour. Mary Poppins would not approve. *Champions* goes all out to establish a rather dubious 'inner city' identity for its small heroes. The Ducks wear scruffy army surplus gear and backwards baseball caps – delinquency, presumably, is just around the corner. But they are a mixed, racially integrated bunch, in sharp contrast to the all-white, all-male Hawks, who are so rotten that they show up (rather inexplicably) among the skips and dustbins where the Ducks play and try to mug them. Clearly, the rows of well-heeled, middle-class parents in the Hawks' bleachers have spawned a kind of Midwestern Hitler Youth, whereas the motley assortment of plaid-shirted slobs who let their kids play in the street have created a harmonious rainbow family. It's fortunate that none of the Ducks seems to have any problems which cannot be solved by simply winning a cup.

The young actors are fine, particularly Matt Doherty, who keeps up a continuous, sportscaster-style running commentary, but they are guesting on Emilio Estevez's show. And Estevez never ceases to disappoint. Because of his role as the blank-faced punk in Alex Cox's *Repo Man*, he still has the aura of someone capable of more than lame formula comedies. But like his brother, Charlie Sheen, he seems content to let his career drift straight to video. Here, Estevez is even lazier than usual; in Gordon's fast-talking lawyer scenes, he enunciates words like "admissible" as if he had learned them phonetically.

Caren Myers

The Cure Show

United Kingdom 1993

Directors: **Aubrey Powell with Leroy Bennett**

Certificate

12

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Fiction Films
In association with
Polygram Video
International

Executive Producers

Chris Parry
Marcus Peterzell
Veronica Gretton

Producer

Steve Swartz

Production Co-ordinators

Jeff Conlin
Benny Tricket

Production Managers

Allen Kelman
Cure Crew:

Robbie Williams

Assistant Director

Blue Leach

Director of Photography

Jeff Zimmerman
In colour and B/W

Camera Operators

Mike Macleary

Daniel Perarl

Tony Mitchell

Ed Stevenson

Tass Michos

Pat Pask

Peter Sensor

Super 8 Photography

Michael Burlingame

Jim Krieg

Victoria Ford

Editors

Nick Wickham

Robert Smith

Film:

Ian Mallett

Liam Hall

On-line:

Bruce Hancock

Telecine

John Barton

Nigel Shaw

Set/Lighting Design

Leroy Bennett

Special Effects

Bill Pierson

Music Performed by

The Cure

Voice/Guitars:

Robert Smith

Basses:

Simon Gallup

Guitars/Keyboards:

Porl Thompson

Perry Bamonte

Drums:

Boris Williams

Songs

"Tape", "Open", "High",

"Trust", "Doing the

Unstuck", "Friday I'm

in Love", "From the

Edge of the Deep

Green Sea", "Cut",

"End" by Robert Smith,

Simon Gallup,

Porl Thompson,

Boris Williams, Perry

Bamonte; "Pictures

Of You", "Lullaby",

"Fascination Street"

by Robert Smith,

Simon Gallup, Porl

Thompson, Boris

Williams, O'Donnell,

Tolhurst; "Just Like

Heaven" by Robert

Smith, Simon Gallup,

Porl Thompson, Boris

Williams, Tolhurst;

"A Night Like This",

"Inbetween Days" by

Robert Smith; "The

Walk", "Let's Go to Bed"

by Robert Smith,

Tolhurst; "Never

Enough" by Robert

Smith, Simon Gallup,

Porl Thompson,

Boris Williams

Make-up

Michi Nakao

Sound Recordists

Burr Huntingdon

Randy Ezratty

Soundtrack:

Bryan 'Chuck' Smith

Robert Smith

Dolby stereo

8,682 feet

96 minutes

July, 1992. Young concert-goers queue for entry to Detroit's Palace Stadium, where British rock group The Cure are playing two nights. The fans are filmed in black-and-white; as the concert starts, the film switches to colour. Surrounded by dry ice, flash-

ing stage lights and viewed from 16 separate camera angles, lead singer Robert Smith and his band perform 18 songs to their 30,000-strong audience.

Poor audience, their dull monochrome existence only transformed into glorious technicolour (and then with a heavy dose of blue) by the arrival on stage of The Cure. No wonder the newly-coloured crowd flash their lighter flames in the dark of the auditorium and wave their arms around, while the many who have brought a single rose for the occasion presumably chuck them at the desirable object that they find in singer Robert Smith. But any floral trajectories we have to trace for ourselves, for *The Cure Show* is, in the tradition of so many unimaginative rock films, a concert movie, no more or less. In the absence of close-up shots – of Smith's gently melting make-up, and a drummer in danger of being blown away by a giant fan – cameras relate a strictly audience-eye view of the stage.

The sound is technically good and the band's darkly romantic songs cannot be faulted. But otherwise the film is so depressingly ordinary – it could fill a late-night TV slot and attract no reaction – that it is hard to see why it was made at all, or why such an opportunity was missed. Ever since their early punk incarnation, The Cure have been fascinated by considerations of image and representation. A series of promo videos directed by Tim Pope – who also made their first feature, *The Cure in Orange* (1986) – captured well the deep sense of unease, sexual and otherwise, that The Cure have always engendered in their listeners. The unease is understandable. Smith looks like an Edward Scissorhands who sublimated puberty with a carbohydrate feeding-frenzy; his love songs always teeter on an edge between threats and promises. He – and more marginally, his musicians – provide a site for whatever fantasies the fans may want to project. That a strong cinematic presence on the part of the directors might have occluded this process could be one reason for *The Cure Show's* incurable blandness.

Louise Gray



Ruffled love cat: Robert Smith

Innocent Blood

USA 1992

Director: John Landis

Certificate
15

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Warner Bros

Executive Producer
Jonathan Sheinberg

Producers
Lee Rich
Leslie Belzberg

Associate Producer
Michael Wolk

Production Supervisor
Janet Wattles

Unit Production Manager
Paul Deason

Location Manager
Robbie Goldstein

Casting
Sharon Howard-Field
Pittsburgh:
Donna Belajac

Assistant Directors
Nicholas Mastandrea
Rosemary C. Cremona
Susan Pickett

Screenplay
Michael Wolk

Director of Photography
Mac Ahlberg

Colour
Technicolor

Camera Operators
Gordon Hayman
Jeff Moore

Video Playback
Howard Weiner

Special Visual Effects
Syd Dutton
Bill Taylor

Illusions Arts Crew
David S. Williams Jnr
Clint Colver
Robert Stromberg
Mark A. Sawicki
John Sullivan

Editor
Dale Beldin

Production Designer
Richard Sawyer

Set Design
Carl Stensel

Set Decorator
Peg Cummings

Special Effects
Roy Arbogast
Bill Lee
John Milinac
Michael Arbogast
Richard Lopez
Steve Johnson's XFX:
Diane Duncan
Bill Corso
Eric Fiedler
Leonard MacDonald
Leon Laderach
Nori Honda
Scott Tebeau
Shaun Smith
Robert DeStefan

Music
Ira Newborn

Orchestrations
Jack Hayes

Supervising Music Editor
Jeff Carson

Music Editor
Eric Reasoner

Songs
"Night" by Johnny Lehmann, Herb Miller, performed by Jackie Wilson; "That Old Black Magic" by Johnny Mercer, Harold Arlen, "I've Got You Under My Skin" by Cole Porter, performed by Frank Sinatra; "Too Far Gone" by O.V. Hirsch, performed by Sturm & Twang; "Gett Off" by Prince Rogers Nelson, performed by Prince & The New Power Generation; "Sexitivity," "I Wanna

Make Love to You"
by Carl Sturken, Evan Rogers, performed by Rhythm Syndicate

Costume Design
Deborah Nadoolman

Costume Supervisor
Louis Infante

Make-up
Ron Berkeley
Janna Phillips

Special Make-up Effects
Steve Johnson

Title Design
Penelope Gottlieb

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor
Rick Franklin

Sound Editors
Doug Jackson
Simon Coke
Gary Mundheim
Jeff Bushelman
David Pettijohn
Mike Dobie
C.T.W.
Larry Mann

ADR Supervisor
James Beshears

Sound Recordists
Joseph Geisinger

Music:
Gary Ladinsky

ADR Recordist
Thomas J. O'Connell

Foley Recordists
Mary Jo Lang
Sandra Garcia
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Paul Massey
Doug Hemphill
Mark Smith

Foley Artists
John Roesch
Catherine Rowe

Optometrist
Dr Duane T. Smyth

Stunt Co-ordinator
Rick Avery

Stunts
Brian Avery
Joni Avery
Clay Boss
Troy Brown
Kurt Bryant
Jeff Cadiente
Monty Cox
Charlie Croughwell
Mike Deluna
Tom Elliott
Jeannie Epper
Richard Epper
Gloria Fioramonti
Andree Gibbs
Andy Gill
Marian Green
Steve Hulin
Keii Johnston
Al Jones
Buck McDancer
Bill McIntosh
Brad Orrison
Mark Orrison
Don Pulford
Spiro Razatos
Branscombe Richmond
Michael J. Sarna
Gregg Smrz
Merritt Yohnka

Cast

Anne Parillaud
Marie

Anthony LaPaglia
Joe Gennaro

Robert Loggia
Sal "The Shark" Macelli

David Proval
Lenny

Don Rickles
Emmanuel Bergman

Rocco Sisto
Gilly

Chazz Palminteri
Tony

Tony Sirico
Jacko

Tony Lip
Frank

Kim Coates
Ray

Marshall Bell
Marsh

Leo Burmester
Flinton

Rohn Thomas
Coroner

Angela Bassett
US Attorney Sinclair

Luis Guzman
Morales

Tom Savini
News Photographer

Christopher Lee
Count Dracula

Peter Cushing
Van Helsing

Dan Quayle
US Vice President

Ike
German Shepherd

Gil Cates Jnr
Dog Boy

Charlie Gormorra
Gorilla

Lamont Arnold
Morgue Desk Man

Yancey Arias
Coroner's Assistant

Frank Oz
Pathologist

Pitty Jennings
David Early

Reporters
Forrest J. Ackerman
Stolen Car Man

Elaine Kagan
Frannie Bergman

Bela Lugosi
Count Dracula

Michael Ritchie
Night Watchman

Bernard Hocke
Motel Clerk

Sam Raimi
Roma Meats Man

Dario Argento
Paramedic

Alfred Hitchcock
Man with Cello Case

Marina Durell
Nurse

Harry Goins
Steve Johnson

Orderlies
Robert Walker

Bruno
Linnea Quigley

Nurse
Michael Wolk

Surgeon
Russ Cochran

Panhandler
Teri Weigel

Lisa Ann Baker
Christina Jimenez

Christina Bowers
Kim Currow

Christina Diaz
Kim Melton

Robin Place
Regina Poole

Tracy Rolan
Tammy Ulm

Katrina Witt
Maribe Zolli

Melody Lounge
Dancers

Ron Roth
Gus

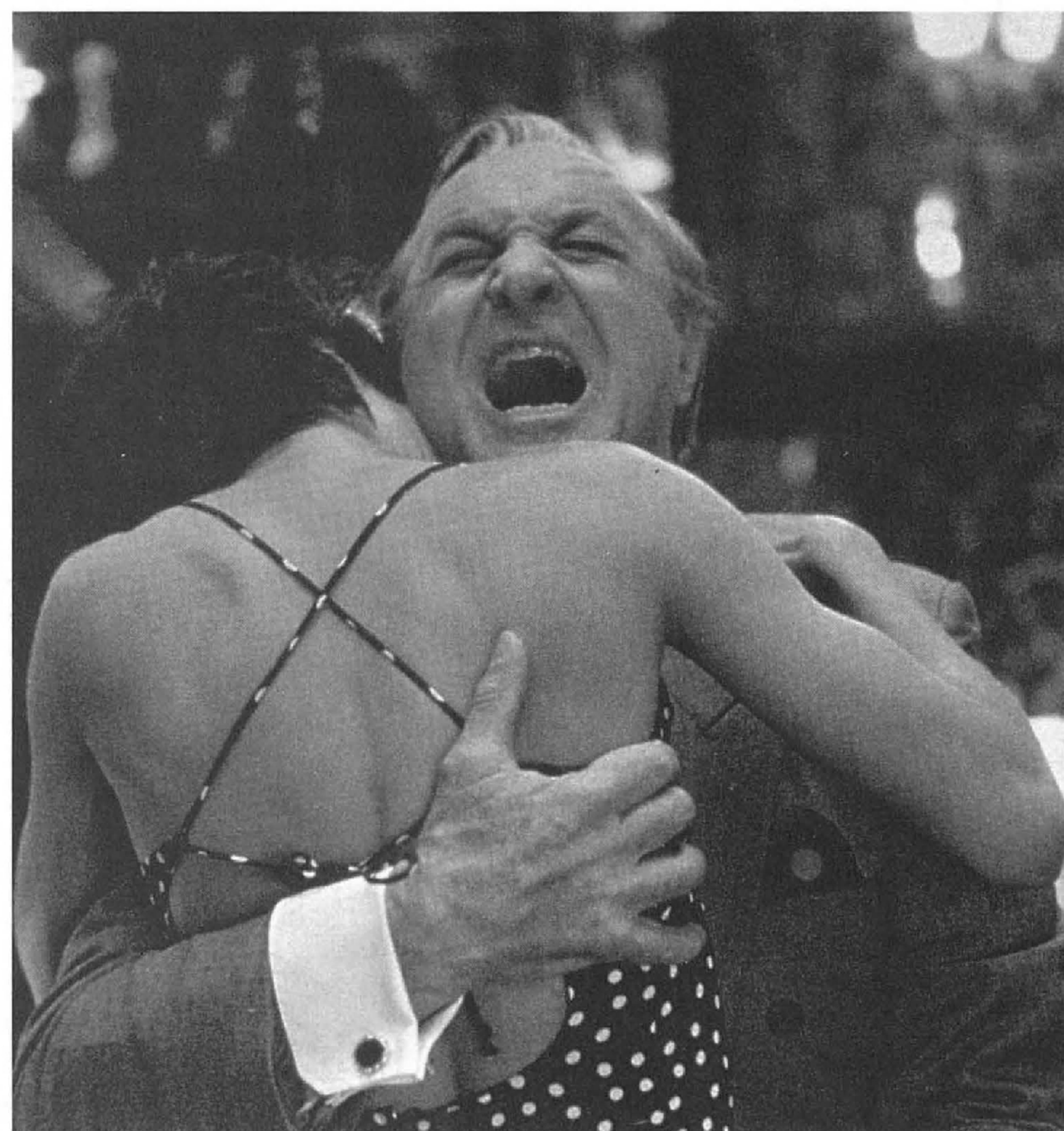
Vic Noto
Tommy

Jerry Lyden
Vinnie

Rick Avery
Cab Driver

Bob Minor
Bus Driver

10,142 feet
113 minutes



Cheek by jowl: Anne Parillaud, Robert Loggia

in a sunny hospital room. In a nearby motel, Marie makes love to Gennaro without harming him and the pair decide to stop the megalomaniac Sal before he turns Pittsburgh into a city of vampires.

Marie and Gennaro track down Sal's hideaway above a sleazy strip joint. After a violent tussle, Sal is hideously burned in a motor accident and finally dispatched by Gennaro's bullet. Marie is on the point of committing suicide by sunlight, but she and Gennaro realise their love for each other and resolve to stay together.

Almost inevitably dubbed A French Vampire in Pittsburgh, John Landis' most recent foray into self-conscious comic horror conspicuously fails to recapture the judiciously accomplished melange of genre thrills, engagingly farcical asides and knowing references that made his 1981 *An American Werewolf in London* so refreshing. Having had its release date put back to avoid unfavourable comparison with the Coppola *Dracula*, *Innocent Blood* seems to have arrived just too late to cash in on the current vampire vogue, while its status as a showcase for Landis' directorial mannerisms looks less than engaging.

It's all here. The replaying of classic movie clips (the Tod Browning and Terence Fisher versions of *Dracula*, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *Strangers on a Train* and so forth) is the central notion of *Dream On*, Landis' cable TV comedy series. And the parade of cameos by other film-makers (Sam Raimi as an abattoir attendant, paramedic Dario Argento, Michael Ritchie as a night watchman) has been an element in his films since *The Blues Brothers*, whose surly prison officer Frank Oz here returns as a mystified pathologist. The problem is that this bag of tics is used

to supply the film with a consistency and coherence it otherwise lacks.

With the exception of the restlessly effective *Into the Night*, which creates a hallucinatory LA odyssey from thinly-linked nocturnal encounters, this sketch mentality often renders Landis' work unsatisfyingly patchy. The compilation *Kentucky Fried Movie*, the ramshackle *Blues Brothers* and the ungainly Eddie Murphy vehicle *Coming to America* all suffer in this way, while his best work, such as *Trading Places* and *American Werewolf*, is founded on carefully structured screenplays.

Although *Innocent Blood* is not without its compensations (notably a tender, handcuffed sex scene with a memorable vampire fellatio gag, and the gleeful transformation of chat show veteran Don Rickles into a decaying ghoul), colourless performances from Parillaud and LaPaglia do little to engage the viewer, and debut screenwriter Michael Wolk has difficulty getting from one sequence to the next without a lot of tiresome driving around town.

The general uncertainty is typified by Landis' use of music: Sinatra's renditions of "That Old Black Magic" and "I've Got You Under My Skin" pop up early on as an elbow-jogging accentuation of the Italian American milieu, but then the idea is rapidly dropped. This is very different from the smart and assured barrage of moon-related pop ditties in *American Werewolf* and suggests a desperate clinging on to devices that have been successful in the past, as a way of covering for losing direction in the present. It's not entirely surprising that Landis has diversified into television, where attention spans are shorter and less demanding; if his cinema career is to survive he needs to reinvent himself.

Trevor Johnston

Jurassic Park

USA 1993

Director: Steven Spielberg

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Companies

Amblin Entertainment
For Universal Pictures

Producers

Kathleen Kennedy
Gerald R. Molen

Associate Producers

Lata Ryan
Colin Wilson

Production Controller

Jane Goe

Unit Production Manager

Paul Deason

Location Managers

Stuart Neumann
Hawaii:

Ken Levine

Aerial Unit Director

David Nowell

Casting

Janet Hirshenson
Janet Jenkins

Associate:

Michael Hirshenson

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

John T. Kretchmer
Michele Panelli-Venetis

Kenneth J. Silverstein
2nd Unit:

Carla McCloskey

Screenplay

Michael Crichton

David Koepf

Based on the novel
by Michael Crichton

Director of Photography

Dean Cundey

In colour

Additional Photography

Lloyd Ahern II

Camera Operator

Raymond Stella

Video Engineer

Ian Kelly

Display Graphics

Supervisor:

Micheal Backes

David Nakabayashi

24 Frame Computer Sync

John Monsour

Brian Callier

"Mr D.N.A." Animation

Kurtz and Friends

Movement Design:

Bob Kurtz

Layout Design:

Robert Peluce

Special Visual Effects/Full

Motion Dinosaurs

Industrial Light

& Magic:

Supervisor:

Mark A.Z. Dippe

Producer:

Janet Healy

Executive in Charge

of Production:

Patricia Blau

Lead Computer

Graphics Supervisor:

Stefen M. Fangmeier

Computer Graphics

Supervisors:

Alex Seiden

George Murphy

Computer Graphics

Animators:

Eric Armstrong

Steve Spaz Williams

Steve Price

James Satoru Straus

Geoff Campbell

Don Waller

Computer Graphics

Artists:

Jean M. Cunningham

Carl N. Frederick

Thomas L. Hutchinson

Joe Letteri

Jeffrey B. Light

James D. Mitchell

Joseph Pasquale

Ellen Poon

Stephen Rosenbaum

John Schlag

Tien Truong

Wade Howie

Computer Graphics

Software Developers:

Michael J. Natkin

Zoran Kacic-Alesic

Brian Knepe

Eric Enderton

John Horn

Colin Wilson

Computer Graphics

Camera Matchmoves:

Patrick T. Myers

Charlie Clavadetscher

Computer Graphics

Department

Production Manager:

Gail Currey

Computer Graphics

Department

Operations Manager:

John Andrew

Berton Jnr

Senior Computer

Graphics Department

Manager:

Douglas Scott Key

Supervisor of Software

& Digital Technology:

Thomas A. Williams

Co-ordinator:

Judith Weaver

Art Director:

Tyrruben Ellingson

Editor:

Michael Gleason

Scanning Supervisor:

Joshua Pines

Optical Supervisor:

John Ellis

Plate Producer:

Mark Miller

Digital Artists:

Carolyn Ensle Rendu

David Carson

Sandy Houston

Barbara Brennan

Lisa Drostova

Bart Giovannetti

Rita E. Zimmerman

Kathleen Beeler

Greg Maloney

Scanning Operators:

Randall K. Bean

Mike Ellis

George Gambetta

Video Engineers:

Fred Meyers

Gary Meyer

Computer Graphics

Co-ordinators:

Ginger Thiesen

Nancy Jill Luckoff

Camera Operators:

Pat Turner

Terry Chostner

Additional Plate

Photography:

Scott Farrar

Matte Artists:

Christopher Evans

Yusei Uesugi

Editorial Co-ordinator:

David Tanaka

Chief Model Makers:

Barbara Affonso

Steve Cawley

Christopher Reed

Lorne Peterson

Ira Keeler

Optical Camera

Operators:

Keith L. Johnson

James C. Lim

Optical Line Up:

John D. Whisnant

Kristen Trattner

Optical/Scanning

Co-ordinator:

Lisa Vaughn

Editor

Michael Kahn

Production Designer

Rick Carter

Art Directors

Jim Teegarden

John Bell

Set Design

John Berger

Lauren Polizzi

Masako Masuda

Set Decorator

Jackie Carr

Set Dresser

Janine Cavoto

Illustrators

Tome Cranham

David Lowery

Sculptures

Yarek Alfer

Computer Design

Stephen Dechant

Special Effects

Foreman:

Don Elliot

Supervisor:

Tom Pahk

Engineer:

Joss Geiduschek

Rigging Foreman:

Tim Moran

Full Motion Dinosaurs

Dennis Muren

Live Action Dinosaurs

Stan Winston

Stan Winston Studios

Art Department

Co-ordinators:

John Rosengrant

Shane Mahan

Mechanical

Department

Co-ordinators:

Richard Landon

Craig Caton-Largent

Concept Artist:

Marsh "Crash"

McCreery

Mechanical Design:

Charles Lutkus III

Evan Brainard

Tim Nordella

Jeff Edwards

Patrick Shearn

Rich Haugen

Richard Galinson

Alfred Sousa

Jon Dawe

J. Alan Scott

Technical Co-ordinator

T-Rex:

Craig Barr

Key Artists:

Mike Tric

Christopher Swift

Joey Orosco

Andy Schoneberg

Greg Figiel

Bill Basso

Shannon Shea

Dave Grasso

Rob Hinderstein

Joseph Reader

Ian Stevenson

Paul Mejias

Master Mould Maker:

Anthony McCray

Dinosaur Skin

Fabricators:

Richard Davison

Karen Mason

Marilyn Dozer-Chaney

Art Department:

Beth Hathaway

Michiko Tagawa

David Beneke

Mark Jurinko

Mitch Coughlin

Nathalie Fratti-

Rapport

Lindsay McGowan

Jeff Periera

Kevin McTurk

Eric Ostroff

Brad Kristko

Nick Marra

Robert Ramsdell

Scott "Gwidge" Urban

Francesca Avila

Sebastin Caillabet

Anthony Gaillard

Pierre Olivier Theuenin

Len Burge

Eileen Kastner-Delago

Kevin Willis

Adam Jones

Mechanical

Department:

Brian Namanny

Matt Durham

Bruce Stark

Gregory Manion

Production

Co-ordinators:

Tara Meaney-Crocitto

Mark Lohff

Dinosaur Supervisor

Phil Tippet

Tippet Studio

Production Supervisor:

Jules Tippet

Computer Interface

Engineer:

Craig Hayes

Senior Animator:

Randal M. Dutra

Animator:

Tom St Amand

Computer Systems:

Adam Valdez

Production

Co-ordinator:

Sheila Duignan

Animatics:

Eric Swenson

Kim Blanchette

Mike Bienstock

Peter Konig

Computer Technicians:

Steve Reding

Douglas Epps

Special Dinosaur

Effects:

Michael Lantieri

Skeletal Display

Research Casting

International

Goat and Body Parts

Lance Anderson

Puppeteers

Lloyd Ball

Craig Barr

Bill Basso

David Beneke

Larry Bolster



The T. Rex revival: Sam Neill

nological achievements are ultimately dangerous because human motives and skills are incapable of keeping pace with pure scientific advances. Ian Malcolm, played with scene-stealing glee by Jeff Goldblum, is Crichton's signature character: a scientist who actually has a theory about why nothing ever goes right. As in the films of James Cameron (a director demonstrably influenced by *Westworld*), Crichton's technophobic visions, like Spielberg's anti-intellectual wonder, can only be brought to the screen by triumphs of technology no less astonishing than genetically recreating dinosaurs or constructing androids in the image of Yul Brynner.

Jurassic Park will be seen by millions for its effects alone, and the combination of puppetwork and animation certainly goes beyond the previous high water marks of Willis H. O'Brien's *King Kong* or Ray Harryhausen's *The Valley of Gwangi*. However, just as a group of diverse experts under the direction of a showman are responsible for the

genetic engineering here (rather than the Frankenstein figures of 50s SF or Roger Corman's *Jurassic Park* cash-in, *Carnosaur*), lone visionaries like O'Brien and Harryhausen have been replaced by teams of multi-skilled employees whose collective achievement lacks the individual heart of *Kong*. A further irony is that *Jurassic Park* makes extensive use of the robotics and image-engineering processes Crichton himself predicted (and saw disastrous consequences for) in *Westworld* and *Looker*.

The most significant change between Crichton's novel and Spielberg's film is the transformation of John Hammond from an unsympathetic capitalist into a cuddly cod-Scots visionary played by Attenborough (irresistibly recalling *Dr Dolittle*). While the novel is an Awful Warning with a 'gosh-wow-dinosaurs!' undercurrent, the film is quite properly in love with its beasties, both as a narrative necessity and as a prelude to the inclusion of a *Jurassic Park* ride on the Universal Studio Tour. In tune with Spielberg's

mind-numbingly ignorant proclamation that "this is not science fiction, it's science eventuality", the film takes its prehistoric animals seriously, employing advisers to ensure that the dinosaurs act more like real ones than the *Jaws* shark did a real Great White. Alan Grant's explanatory lectures – about the way saurians probably had more in common with the birds than the reptiles – smugly underlines the film's authenticity. Even the saur-hating Muldoon, as he is about to be devoured, breathes "clever girl" (all the monsters are female) in appreciation of the trick the velociraptors have used to trap him. Just as *Close Encounters* crossbred 'true life' UFO stories with 50s Jack Arnold, *Jurassic Park* is informed by dino-buff Spielberg's genre heritage: images and lines deliberately recall *King Kong*, Ray Bradbury's story 'The Foghorn' (filmed as *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*), *Dinosaurs!* and *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*. No matter how syrupy the kid-hating Grant's transformation into a fantasy father might be, it's hard to resist such primal moments as his calling to a herd of brachiosaurs with a Bradbury-ish honk only to be answered by a charming animal who takes the sugar off the scene by sneezing quantities of slime over Alexis.

Many annoying things about the film probably constitute survival traits in an international marketplace that would like a new monster to depose *E.T.* in the quarter-billion-dollar club. The softening of the novel so that only secondary characters are killed; the switch from nightmare horror to clean chase; the down-playing of any critique of entertainment capitalism and the pointless science (Crichton's Hammond has a lengthy speech about why it makes more economic sense to recreate dinosaurs than cure cancer); the inclusion of Laura Dern in shorts; and the abandonment of internal script logic in favour of a storyline which demonstrates its own chaos theory – all these factors compromise the film as drama but widen its appeal. The surprise is that painstaking effects co-exist with extraordinary clumsiness: in the process of adaptation, many subplots are pruned but some extremely awkward factors (the ability of the dinosaurs spontaneously to change sex and thus breed beyond their controlled populations) are confusingly retained, though they serve no narrative function.

Like *Jurassic Park*, *Jurassic Park* is ultimately unable safely to contain its attractions, but the dinosaurs are still magnificent: the tyrannosaurus attack during a night storm, a fleeing herd of gallimimuses, the gremlin-like colored dilophosaurus cautiously killing its prey and the game of velociraptor hide-and-seek must stand as definitive. However, the most deeply-felt and emotionally complex shot of the film – a pan from a rack of now-unsaleable cutesy dinosaur merchandise to the dejected Hammond – raises issues that the media monolith of a 90s studio blockbuster could never address.

Kim Newman

Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.

USA 1992

Director: Leslie Harris

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Metro Tartan
Production Company
Truth 24 F.P.S.
For Miramax

Producers

Erwin Wilson
Leslie Harris

Associate Producer

Nelson George

Production Co-ordinator

Gregory Harris

Location Manager

Eric Klein

Casting

Tracey Moore

Screenplay

Leslie Harris

Director of Photography

Richard Connors

In colour

Additional Cameramen

Erwin Wilson
Nicholas Hoffman

Editor

Jack Haigis

Production Designer

Mike Green

Set Decorator

Robin Chase

Music

Street Element:

Eric "Vietnam" Sadler

Chris Champion

Epitome of Scratch

Additional:

Street Element

2nd Division:

Al "Purple" Hayes

Jimi Foxx

Music Producer

Eric "Vietnam" Sadler

Music Supervisor

Eric "Vietnam" Sadler

Songs

"Chantel's Theme" by

Eric "Vietnam" Sadler,

Chris Champion,

Nikki D, Cee Asia,

performed by Nikki

D, Cee Asia; "Minuet

for a Girl" by Brian

Holt; "When You Love

Someone" by Eric

"Vietnam" Sadler,

Cee Asia, performed

by Cee Asia; "Wikki",

"Losin' Me", by Eric

"Vietnam" Sadler;

"XC Jam" by Chris

Champion; "Now

is the Time" by Eric

"Vietnam" Sadler,

Chris Champion,

performed by

Kimberly Davis;

"Share Our Love"

by and performed by

Paul Shabazz; "Mixed

Up World" by Willie

Bruno II, Angela Stone,

performed by Angela

Stone; "Having Fun",

"Party Jam", "Bedtime",

"Worries" by Willie

Bruno II; "Not Just

Another Girl" by

Genarvis Albright,

performed by Ron

Grant; "Daddy's Little

Girl" by Nikki Dee,

Sid Reynolds, Suzanne

Vega, performed by

Nikki Dee; "J. Dub's

Theme" by Mark

Gillette, Anthony Allen,

Gary Stanton, Gary

Rinaldi, James Boxley,

Robert Taylor, Keith

Boxley, performed

by Son of Bazerk;

"We Want Your Money"

by Mark Skeete, Lyndah

D. McCaskill, Kenny

Gamble, Leon Huff,

A. Jackson, performed

by B.W.P.; "Your True

Heart and Shining

Star" by C. Womack,

B. Womack, performed

by the O'Jays

Costume Design

Bruce Brickus

Make-up

Karen Robinson

Sound Recordist

Harrison Williams

Dolby stereo

Consultant

Lenne Roseman

Cast

Arian Johnson

Chantel Mitchell

Kevin Thigpen

Tyrone

Ebony Jerido

Natete

Chequita Jackson

Paula

William Badget

Cedrick

Jerard Washington

Gerard

Karen Robinson

Debra Mitchell

Tony Wilkes

Owen Mitchell

Johnny Roses

Mr Weinberg

Shawn King

Andre

Kisha Richardson

Lavonica

Monet Dunham

Denisha

Wendall Moore

Mr Moore

Laura Ross

Woman Customer

Rashmella

Woman in

Welfare Office

Ron L. Cox

Clinic Doctor

Richie Carter

Rashawn

Mwata Carter

Amiri

Gary Perez

Store Manager

Lynn Franklin

Social Worker

Erwin Wilson

Louis Thomas Jr

Policemen

Nicholas B. Carter

Child Who Opens Bag

Jasmine Thomas

Chantel's & Ty's Baby

Moise Dominique

New Born Baby

8,748 feet

97 minutes

Every Saturday, 17-year-old self-described "tough girl" Chantel Mitchell takes the IRT subway from her home in the Brooklyn projects to a job on the West Side of Manhattan. She works in a speciality food shop, and after work window-shops with her ▶

◀ friend Natete. On the IRT home, they meet another friend, who has had a baby; she confides that the father has given her no help and she depends on her mother. At home, Chantel is kept awake by her parents' arguments, as she dreams of a better life. At school, when her teacher Mr Weinberg brings up the Holocaust, Chantel demands he teach history more "Afrocentrically". Sent to the principal, she informs him she plans to graduate early; he warns that, if she really wants to be a doctor, she must "tone down" her mouth.

Chantel's father complains about her seeing her boyfriend Gerard, who is from the same project. In the park, Chantel and her girlfriends discuss sex, Aids and contraception. At a party, Chantel meets a stranger, Tyrone; learning he has a jeep, she deserts the party and Gerard for a ride with him. She begins asking Natete to cover for her with her family, so she can spend nights with Ty. During their first interlude, he laughs off her suggestion that he wear a condom. Soon, Chantel is throwing up in the ladies' room at school, and a home pregnancy test proves positive. She visits a clinic, where she consults Paula, a counsellor; then she waits in the welfare office, only to find she does not qualify. Chantel decides to deal with her pregnancy as "a dream", even telling Natete she has got her period. She confides in Ty, but he insults and then leaves her; later, more contrite, he offers her the money to finance an abortion. Instead, Chantel buys a girdle and takes Natete on a shopping spree. When Ty discovers what she has done with his money, she avoids his calls. Finally, he corners her and angrily tells her she must make some decision.

By autumn, Chantel is still avoiding reality. Since Ty has been avoiding her, she seeks him out. Although shocked by her size, he seems happy to see her. But their reunion is interrupted by the onset of labour. Ty telephones Paula, who is unable to summon an ambulance. She and her partner speed to the rescue, but Chantel delivers her child before they arrive. Terrified, she instructs Ty to hide her baby in a rubbish bin; it is found by a child, who runs for help. Coaxing the truth out of Chantel, Paula runs to the bin, where she finds the police but no baby. Back at Tyrone's, however, Paula and her partner find the whole family (Tyrone, out of guilt, went back after the baby). One winter later, Chantel is well-dressed and walking around a community college, with her growing, equally well-attired infant; she announces, "We're getting our shit together".

Just Another Girl on the I.R.T. begins as a film about the pros and cons of teenage 'attitude'. But, before it is half way complete, didacticism has drained this timely idea of all potential. The girl of the title is the personality-packed product of a Brooklyn housing project. Chantel is framed as a self-help paradigm out of the hip-hop universe – 'consciously'-dressed, up-

wardly mobile and full of lofty dreams. She wants to graduate high school early, finish college and study medicine. But, in reality, these visions serve the same purpose as her 'fly' wardrobe – they confer the bravado which gets her through each day.

Viewers are shown successive chunks of the problems which forged Chantel's defences: the pal whose boyfriend disappeared the moment she had his baby; the troublesome customers at her workplace; the worried parents struggling with menial jobs and terrible hours. But most of these presentations are messages on legs. Live-lier, and delightfully real, is Chantel's giggly posse of girlfriends, a cadre whose advice about sex, Aids and contraception is less reliable than their knowledge of name-brand sneakers.

Just as it starts to zero in on the debits of hip-hop posture, however, *Girl* shifts its focus completely; Chantel's saga becomes a means to 'educate' the viewer. Trying to impress her school-mates with Afrocentric moxie, Chantel dismisses the Holocaust, and snubs a Jewish teacher. Then she drops her homeboy squeeze Gerard for the flashier Tyrone (when Gerard demands to know what his rival can really offer, Chantel pauses only a nanosecond before she answers, "a jeep"). These scenes may be intended as honest portraits of immaturity. But they are so crudely handled that they reinforce stereotypes: such as the notion that 'Afrocentricity' has to be Louis Farakhan's turf, or the idea that young black women are the gold-digging 'skeezers' of rap.

Once Chantel engineers her connection with Tyrone, the plot gets even wobblier. With her positive pregnancy test, the clinic visit, and Tyrone's anger, we enter the schematic world of television problem pics. Chantel, however, clings to her tough-girl persona, with Ariyan Johnson making her stubbornness so perverse it commands attention. Chantel may drag herself to see counsellors and welfare officers, even accept the \$500 Tyrone gives her to buy an abortion. But she denies her pregnancy with incredible force of will, lying to friends and stuffing her growing tummy into a girdle. With her closest friend Natete (a wonderful debut by singer and dancer Ebony Jerido), she even blows Tyrone's money during an all-day shopping spree. Finally, she has the baby – prematurely, as she is trying to reconcile with Tyrone. But even then she orders the frantic father to hide it in the rubbish.

By this point (after a scene of sustained screaming which outranks Marilyn Burns in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), *Girl* has long since abdicated any plot dynamic. The movie's only strong point is its sharp and zappy cast. But hazy vision finally saps even their energy – just as the pasted-on happy ending mocks their efforts to keep things real. When we reach Chantel's *deus ex machina* transformation, one could be forgiven for thinking that Tipper Gore had final cut.

Cynthia Rose

Last Action Hero

USA 1993

Director: John McTiernan

Certificate

15

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Columbia Pictures

Executive Producer

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Producers

Steve Roth

John McTiernan

Co-producers

Robert E. Relyea

Neal Nordlinger

Associate Producer

Robert H. Lemer

Production Co-ordinator

Susan Dukow

Production Office

New York:

Katherine A. Kennedy

Unit Production Manager

William C. Gerrity

Location Managers

Robert H. Lemer

Joe Madalena

2nd Unit Director

Fred M. Waugh

Casting

Jane Jenkins

Janet Hirshenson

Assistant Directors

Brian W. Cook

Carl Goldstein

David A. Ticotin

2nd Unit:

Bruce Moriarty

Newton D. Arnold

Dana Kuznetzkoff

Screenplay

Shane Black

David Arnott

Story

Zak Penn

Adam Leff

Director of Photography

Dean Semler

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography

David B. Nowell

Camera Operators

Douglas Ryan

2nd Unit:

Frederic J. Smith

New York:

Ken Ferris

Steadicam Operator

Mark O'Kane

Visual Effects Consultant

Richard Greenberg

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

John Sullivan

Producers:

Chuck Comisky

Alison Savitch

Co-ordinator:

Suzanne Pastor

Editor:

Miller Drake

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Stuart Robertson

Digital Co-ordinator:

Lori J. Nelson

Sony Pictures Imageworks

Supervisor:

Tim McGovern

Producer:

Bill Birell

Neil Eskuri

Ron Brinkman

Adrien Iler

Andrea Sholer

David Douglas

Scott Kilburn

Mark Pompian

Mark Lasoff

R/Greenberg Associates West

Visual Effects

Producers:

Tricia Henry Ashford

New York:

Robert M. Greenberg

Nancy Bernstein

Computer Graphics

Supervisors:

Joe Francis

Jay Riddle

Senior Digital Artists:

Beth Block

Alan Lasky

Sylvian Moreau

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Laurel Klick

Jacques Stroweis

Boss Film Studio

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Neil Krepela

Visual Effects

Line Producer:

Donna Langston

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Jim Rygiel

Optical Supervisor:

Mike Cooper

Post-production

Supervisor:

Michael Sweeney

Fantasy II

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Gene Warren Jnr

Visual Effects

Producer:

Leslie Huntley

Optical Supervisor:

Betzy Bromberg

Optical Camera:

David Tucker

Roto Supervisor:

Bret Mixon

Visual Concepts

Engineering

Visual Effects:

Peter Kuran

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Kevin O'Neil

Animation Effects:

Kevin Kutchaver

Harry Moreau

Optical Effects

Supervisor:

David Emerson

The Baer Animation Company

Animation Designer:

David Baer

Animation Supervisor:

Jane Baer

Production Manager:

Craig Sost

Additional Visual Effects

Industrial

Light & Magic

Computer

Film Company

Composite Image

Systems

Image G

Editor

John Wright

Film Editor

Richard A. Harris

Additional:

Robert K. Lambert

Production Designer

Eugenio Zanetti

Art Directors

Marek Dobrowolski

Rick Heinrichs

New York:

John Wright Stevens

Set Design

Peter J. Kelly

Natalie Richards

Carl Stensel

Elizabeth Lapp

Set Decorators

Cindy Carr

New York:

Debra Shutt

Illustrators

Simon Murton

David Negron

Mauro Borrelli

Scenic Artist

New York:

John Howard Linder

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Tommy Fisher

New York:

Connie Brink

Special Effects Administrator

Paula Fisher

Automotive Miniatures

Alterian Studios

Music

Michael Kamen

Music Extracts

"Overture, The

Marriage of Figaro"

by Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart, performed by

Academy of St Martin-

in-the-Fields; "Twilight

Zone Theme" by and

performed by Marius

Constant; "Hamlet"

by William Walton;

"Speedy", "Bird Seed"

by Carl W. Stalling

Music Performed by

Buckethead

Jerry Cantrell

Mike Inez

Guy Pratt

Scott Rockenfield

Rick Nielsen

Andrew Warwick

Robert Fernandez

Sue McLean

Orchestrations

William Ross

Lolita Ritmanis

Music Editors

Christopher S. Brooks

Eric Reasoner

Songs

"A Little Bitter"

by Layne Staley,

Jerry Cantrell, Mike

Inez, Sean Kinney,

"What The Hell Have I"

by Jerry Cantrell,

performed by Alice

In Chains; "Last Action

Hero" by Frank

Hannon, Jeff Keith,

Tommy Skeoch, Brian

Wheat, performed by

Tesla; "Big Gun" by

Angus Young, Malcolm

Young, performed by

AC/DC; "Real World"

by Queensrÿche,

Michael Kamen,

performed by

Queensrÿche; "Cock

the Hammer" by Louis

Freese, Senen Reyes,

Cast	Anna Navarro
Arnold Schwarzenegger	Cop at Station
Jack Slater	Dex Sanders
F. Murray Abraham	Mitchell
John Practice	Nick Dimitri
Art Carney	Doctor (Funeral)
Frank	Sven-Ole Thorson
Charles Dance	Gunman
Benedict	Rick Ducommun
Frank McRae	Ripper's Agent
Dekker	Wendle Josepher
Tom Noonan	Candy Girl
Ripper	Michael V. Gazzo
Robert Prosky	Torelli
Nick	Lee Reheman
Anthony Quinn	Krause
Vivaldi	R.C. Bates
Mercedes Ruehl	Rabbi
Mom	Colleen Camp
Austin O'Brien	Ratcliff
Danny	Donna Borghoff
Sir Ian McKellen	Hooker
Death	John McTiernan Sr
Professor Toru Tanaka	Cigar Stand Man
Tough Asian Man	Tiffany Puhly
Joan Plowright	Autograph Seeker
Teacher	Keith Barish
Jason Kelly	Jim Belushi
Lieutenant Governor	Chevy Chase
Noah Emmerich	Chris Connelly
Rookie	Karen Duffy
Tina Turner	Larry Ferguson
The Mayor	Leeza Gibbons
Billy Lucas	Hammer
SWAT Cop	Little Richard
Ryan Todd	Robert Patrick
Andrew Slater	Maria Shriver
Apollo Dukakis	Sharon Stone
Polonius	Jean-Claude Van Damme
Patrick Flanagan	Melvin Van Peebles
Punk	Damon Wayans
Donald C. Llorens	
Monaghan	11,770 feet
Michael Chieffo	131 minutes
Monroe	
Mike Muscat	
Cop in LA Station	
John Finnegan	
Watch Commander	
Bobbie Brown-Lane	
Angie Everhart	
Video Babes	
Bridgette Wilson	
Whitney/Meredith	
Jeffrey Braer	
Skeezy	
Anthony Peck	
Cop at Ex-Wife's House	
Paul Gonzales	
Cop in LA Station	

● Supercop Jack Slater pushes aside a phalanx of cops surrounding a skyscraper and punches his way to the top where he confronts the Ripper, an axe-wielding psycho holding Slater's young son hostage. Although the Ripper has him covered, Slater gets the drop on him and the killer totters off the roof.

Just then the screen goes blank. The action has been taking place in an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, *Jack Slater III*, screened in a dingy, almost deserted Times Square movie theatre, and watched by Slater's Number One fan, 11-year-old Danny Madigan. When Danny upbraids Nick, an ageing projectionist, for letting the screen go dead, Nick tells him to come back at midnight for a private preview of the brand new *Jack Slater IV*.

Disobeying his Mom's orders to stay safely locked up in their tiny apartment, Danny, after being mugged, goes to the theatre. Before starting the film, Nick hands Danny a ticket, which he says he got from the magician Houdini, who told him it had special powers. In *Jack Slater IV* the cop is up against mob don Vivaldi and his disdainful English hitman Benedict. When Danny is watching a particularly lethal chase, the ticket twinkles and Danny is transported into the action, landing in the



Quiet in the balcony: Arnold Schwarzenegger

back seat of Slater's car. Danny uses his viewer's special knowledge to help out a sceptical Slater (who, like all the other characters in the movie, doesn't believe he's not real and has never heard of Arnold Schwarzenegger). Despite some bumps in the road, the two are able to foil Vivaldi's booby-trapping of another mobster's funeral and expose corrupt FBI agent John Practice. But Benedict gets Danny's magic ticket and moves over into the real world.

Danny and Slater pursues Benedict, even though in the real world the wounds Slater laughed off in the movies will be dangerous. Discovering a public indifference to violence and the powers he now possesses, an uninhibited Benedict plans to bring movie monsters to the real world and so rule it. He begins with the Ripper, whom Slater encounters at the premiere for *Jack Slater IV*, where he also runs into Arnold Schwarzenegger. Slater must relive the climax of *Jack Slater III* once more before dispatching Benedict. He is shot in the process and receives a visit from Death; but with the help of Danny and the magic ticket, is able to return unscathed to his movie.

● It should have been enough to say that *Last Action Hero* suffered from over-inflation. After all, the movie is built on a puny gimmick – the notion that the conventions of hi-tech action adventure will look silly when contrasted with, if not life exactly, then the conventions of more ordinary melodrama. But no amount of cinematic steroids could turn this into a muscular premise. Not that there's any want of trying. For the film's first 45 minutes or so, it seems that director John McTiernan (*Die Hard*, *Predator*) is trying to meld *Weekend* with the Keystone Kops, sending a fleet of cars careering and crashing from unexpected heights to unanticipated depths. Freed from the restraints of believability, the action expert launches his rubber-soled missiles

from a succession of impossibly-located moving ramps, using downtown LA's over-photographed tiers of bridges, roads and paved river-beds to refreshing effect.

But there are already warning signs aplenty that this hero's odyssey will be bogus. The whole sequence in which the kindly old projectionist (an over-emphatic Robert Prosky) presents young Danny with the magic ticket that effects his passage to Slater-land is too sugary, its lip-smacking anticipation of fantasy at odds with the sardonic presentation of action that begins with the film's very first shot. And the film's supposedly realistic moments, those that deal with Danny's living conditions, are hopelessly compromised by typical big-studio calculation. There may well be some white kids living with single moms in the Times Square area (though perhaps not so white as the blond pale-skinned Californian, Austin O'Brien, who plays Danny), but the poor kids so situated are far, far more likely to be African-American or Puerto Rican. But poor black kids don't sell tickets, and so the 'real' section of the film, which is supposed to offer such a bracingly satirical contrast to the action fantasy, is already compromised by demographic marketing fantasies of its own.

Soon enough, even the film-within-a-film, *Jack Slater IV*, loosens its moorings. Danny keeps trying to tell everyone that they're not real, that they're movie characters and he can tell them what their best move will be, since he's watched the start of the movie and knows who and where the bad guys are. This is a good enough joke if the villains are foiled by inexplicably foresighted cops. But these crooks, despite some delightfully haughty sadism from Charles Dance, are bozos themselves. And when their great coup turns out to be booby-trapping the corpse of a dead mobster known for his propensity to break wind, the storm of fart jokes takes the action right into

the toilet. *Jack Slater IV* ends up perched uncomfortably between *Airplane* and the most recent (and already self-mocking) *Lethal Weapon*.

A lot of this can be put down to miscalculation and some egotism on the part of the film-makers, who seem eager to distance their own intelligences from the body of their work. However, it's cynicism that ultimately does in *Last Action Hero*. The first show-down between Slater and the Ripper is mocked for its reliance on excessive stylization to jump-start emotion. Then, just when Slater is bemoaning the action-hero tendencies of his daughter, the Ripper's hostage – who turns out to have died – is revealed as Slater's son, all the better to generate some sympathy for what is an avowed stereotype.

The kitsch turns from undercurrent to raging flood when Slater makes it to the 'real' New York, where he runs into Schwarzenegger and berates him for ruining his life. We've just seen Arnold arriving at the movie premiere with wife Maria Shriver, who angrily cautions him against promoting the restaurant chain he co-owns with other movie stars. Of course, Arnold can't keep himself from pushing the burgers, but the kidding is not as pointed as it looks. After all, Arnold winks, sells, winks, sells and winks again, and it's the selling that keeps its force while the wink turns into a tic.

But then, without shame, the film climaxes on the very same scene that climaxed *Jack Slater III*, the encounter between the Ripper and Slater – only this time Danny is the hostage. In other words, every cliché that the film had mocked for being cheap and sentimental is suddenly resuscitated long enough to bring the movie to a supposedly emotion-packed end. This is a film that cannot imagine existing without the very same stock situations and characters it denigrates. It's a perfect example of cinematic self-hatred.

Henry Sheehan

Made in America

USA 1993

Director: Richard Benjamin

Certificate
12

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Companies
Stonebridge
Entertainment/
Kalola Productions Inc
For Regency
Enterprises/
Le Studio Canal Plus

Executive Producers
Nadine Schiff
Marcia Brandwynne

Co-executive Producer
Steven Reuther

Producers
Arnon Milchan
Michael Douglas
Rick Bieber

Co-producer
Patrick Palmer

Associate Producer
Suzanne Rothbaum

Production Co-ordinator
Kathy Sarreal

Unit Production Manager
Joe Aguilar

Location Managers
Charles Miller
Nathan Genzier
Debra Girard

Post-production Supervisor
Carol Dantuono

2nd Unit Directors
Patrick Palmer
David R. Ellis

Casting
Rueben Cannon
& Associates
Associate:
David Giella

Assistant Directors
L. Dean Jones Jnr
Newton Arnold
Bryan Denegal
Richard Brodsky
2nd Unit:
Robert J. Mooney

Screenplay
Holly Goldberg Sloan

Story
Marcia Brandwynne
Nadine Schiff
Holly Goldberg Sloan

Director of Photography
Ralf Bode

Colour
DeLuxe
prints by
Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Michael A. Benson

Aerial Photography
Stan McClain

Camera Operators
Harald Ortenburger
2nd Unit:
Edward Gold
William D. Barber
Michael St. Hilaire

Steadicam Operators
Ted Churchill
Jeff Mart

Video Consultant
Rob McWilliams

Editor
Jacqueline Cambas

Production Designer
Evelyn Sakash

Set Decorator
Hilton Rosemarin

Set Dressers
George Mauricio
Eugene Teixeira

Special Effects
Thomas F. Sindich

Music
Mark Isham

Music Extract
"Pomp and Circumstance"
by Sir Edward Elgar

Music Arrangements
Kim Scharnberg

African:
Lebo M

Orchestrations
Kim Scharnberg

Music Supervisors
Dick Rudolph
Elektra Records:
Carole Childs
Amos Newman

Music Editor
Richard Whitfield

Songs
"Go Away" by Gloria M. Estefan, Lawrence Dermer, performed by Gloria Estefan; "Dance or Die" by Will Smith, Jeff Townes, Victor E. Cooke, performed by DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince; "The Colors of Love" by Carole Bayer Sager, James Ingram, Bruce Roberts, performed by Lisa Fischer; "Personality" by and performed by Greg Lawson; "Wild Thing" by Chip Taylor; "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by E.Y. Harburg, Harold Arlen, performed by Judy Garland; "Voromby" by Samoelo Andriammalahanjaona, performed by Tarika Sammy, Henry Kaiser, David Lindley; "Ngoma Ra Mrongo (Taita, Kenya)" (trad); "Rebound" by and performed by Gen; "If You Need a Miracle" by Eddie Cunningham, Dennis Knutson, performed by Ben E. King; "Smoke on the Water" by Ritchie Blackmore, Ian Gillan, Roger Glover, Jon Lord, Ian Paice, performed by Deep Purple; "Does He Do It Good" by Keith Sweat, Roy Murray, performed by Keith Sweat and Silk; "I Know I Don't Walk on Water" by Laura Satterfield, Ira Walker, performed by Laura Satterfield, Ephraim Lewis; "M-O-T-H-E-R (A Word That Means the World to Me)" by Howard Johnson, Theodore Morse; "Mysterious Island" by Mickey Hart, Airtto Moreira, Laura Purim, Jeff Starling, performed by Mickey Hart, Planet Drum; "What Is This?" by Carmen Alice, performed by Sergio Mendes; "The Good, the Bad, the Ugly" by Ennio Morricone; "Stand" by Sylvester Stewart, performed by YT Style; "Made in America" by Del, Kwame, Domino Dee, performed by Del Thafunkee Homosapien

Choreography
Lester Wilson

Costume Design
Elizabeth McBride

Wardrobe Supervisor
Eileen Mae Sieff

Make-up Artists
Michael Germain
Daniel Striepeke

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
Mike Dobie
Jeff Bushelman

Sound Editors
Duke L. Brown
Scott Burrow
C.T. Welch
Mark S. Gordon
Peter C. Barbour

Sound Recordists
Richard Lightstone
Daniel D. Gleich
Philip Perkins

ADR Recordist
Christina Tucker

Foley Recordist
Bruce Bell

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Chris Jenkins
Mark Smith
Doug Hemphill
Rudy Lara
Tony Jenkins

Foley Artists
Sarah Monat
Robin Harlan
Ellen Heuer

Stunt Co-ordinator
David R. Ellis

Stunts
Kevin Bailey
La Faye Baker
Greg Barnett
Dan Bell
Robin Lynn Bonaccorsi
Rocky Capella
Lisa K. Dempsey
Annie Ellis
Richard Ellis
Tom Huff
Keith Jones
Kevin Larson
Willie Leong
Steve E. Martin
Johnny Martin
Mike Martinez
Tim C. Meridith
Jeff Mosley
David Renaud
R.A. Rondell
Kym Washington
Dick Ziker

Animal Trainers
Steve E. Martin
Donna Martin
Jerry Therrien
Charlie Sammut
Keith Jones

Film Extract
The Little Princess (1939)

Cast
Whoopi Goldberg
Sarah Mathews
Ted Danson
Hal Jackson
Will Smith
Tea Cake Walters
Nia Long
Zora Mathews
Paul Rodriguez
José
Jennifer Tilly
Stacy
Peggy Rea
Alberta
Clyde Kusatsu
Bob Takashima
David Bowe
Teddy
Jeffrey Joseph
James
Rawley Valverde
Diego
Fred Mancuso
Bruce
Charlene Fernetz
Paula
Shawn Levy
Dwayne
Lu Leonard
Clinic Nurse
Joe Lerer
Hospital Doctor
Janice Edwards
Hospital Nurse
Michael McFall
Hospital Intern
Phylliss Avery
Frances Bergen
White Women
O'Neal Compton
Rocky
Michael Halton
Stew
William John Murphy
Ross Benjamin
Personal Assistants
Mel Stewart
Principal Rockwell
David E. Kazanjian
Mr Alden
Jim Cranna
Man at Car Lot
Shannon Orrock
Wife at Car Lot
Alexandra Joy Cuccia
Child at Car Lot
Chikako Felper
Patricia Jow
Japanese Women
Raquel Osborne
Woman in Sushi Bar
James Anthony Cotton
Man with Beer
Miyuki Takei
Sushi Waitress
Akihide "Bo" Fujiyama
Sushi Chef
YT Style:
Gregory Fields
Meashell McCann
Antoine Foote
Jeffrey Russell
Rappers

9,943 feet
110 minutes

Sarah Mathews is a black, widowed single mother who runs a bookstore called *The African Queen* in Berkeley, California. Her daughter Zora accidentally discovers that she has AB blood type, which means that Sarah's dead husband was not her father. Sarah admits that she used a sperm bank, so Zora, with the help of her ex-boyfriend Tea Cake, sets out to discover her real father's identity. She learns that the donor is a car salesman, Hal Jackson. Stunned but undeterred by the fact that he's white, she tells him who she is, but he refuses to acknowledge any relationship. After Zora tells a horrified Sarah what she's learned, Sarah goes to the car lot and insists that Hal stay away from her and her daughter. At first, he is happy to comply, but has second thoughts



Meeting cute: Ted Danson, Whoopi Goldberg

after watching a Shirley Temple movie. After a chase through the streets of Berkeley involving an elephant and a bicycle bell, Sarah and Hal spend an enjoyable evening, almost ending up in bed. They are interrupted by Zora, who is aghast at their behaviour. Sarah and Hal quarrel and, while driving off in a fury on her bicycle, Sarah is hit by a car. At the hospital, Hal is asked to give blood and learns that he is type O, and therefore not Zora's father. He and Sarah part amicably. Sometime later, on Zora's graduation day, she is called upon to give a speech after winning a coveted science scholarship. She invites Sarah on stage to thank her, and Hal steps forward to help her on to the podium. Zora introduces him as her 'Dad', and all three join in a rousing rendition of "Stand" with the school choir.

Like Onan, recent movies centring on sperm banks have spilt their seed on fallow ground. Both George Miller's *Frozen Assets* and the British *Leon the Pig Farmer* suffered from stunted growth, blighted by screenplay defects and clumsy directorial nurturing. *Made in America* is a somewhat better bred specimen, but it still suffers from a certain sterility, eschewing its initial promise to confound race relations with eugenics in favour of a bland and abrupt happy ending. None the less, it's a likeable effort, good enough for a sultry summer evening at the multiplex when the film you came to see is sold out.

There are moments when one can glimpse the remains of what might have been a spikier, more complex movie. For example, when Zora and Sarah argue about the embarrassment of Hal's whiteness, Zora suggests that she has, and still can, 'pass' as black, just like the kids on *The Cosby Show*. "Don't talk to me about those kids!" fumes Sarah, subtly indicating the

anger that many Afro-Americans feel about the dominance of lighter-skinned black actors in the media mainstream. It becomes clear that the Berkeley/Oakland location was chosen because Berkeley, especially the University of California campus that Sarah cycles through in the opening sequence, was one of the cradles of the multiculturalist philosophy – encapsulated in a T-shirt that proclaims "Jesus was a black man" – that her bookshop espouses. That Hal is a quasi-redneck, and thus her cultural opposite, is signalled by his cowboy hats, pickup trucks, and blindingly blonde girlfriend. The clunkingly obvious irony is that both Sarah and Hal are 'made in America', but apart from the aforementioned scene the tensions inherent in their situation are never explored beyond the level of props. Unlike *Jungle Fever*, this film shies away raising any really controversial questions in favour of the homiletic 'answers' that family values, read as universal, provide.

Director Richard Benjamin began his career as an actor, perhaps most memorably as the perplexed lead in *Goodbye, Columbus*. The brittle charm of his persona translated well into his delightful directorial debut, *My Favourite Year*. Since then, his career has been rather disappointing, but *Made in America* at least shows that he can coax performers (even animal ones), even if all else is a little lacklustre. Goldberg and Danson are not particularly deep actors, but both are affable and endowed with excellent comic timing. It's hard not to imagine a frisson between them generated by their off-screen romance. The tabloid hullabaloo about their love affair has probably done more to challenge taboos about mixed race relationships than the film itself; but then again, screwball comedy and social commentary do not make comfortable bedfellows.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Sofie

Denmark/Norway/Sweden 1992

Director: Liv Ullmann

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Arrow Films

Production Companies

Nordisk Film
& TV (Valby)/
Norsk Film (Jarlsberg)/
Svensk Filmindustri
(Stockholm)
With financial
assistance from the
Danish Film Institute/
Swedish Film Institute

Producer

Lars Kolvig

Production Controller

Sanne Arnt Torp

Production Co-ordinator

Monica Steenberg

Production Manager

Henrik Møller-Sørensen

Assistant Director

Tom Hedegaard

Screenplay

Liv Ullmann

Peter Poulsen

Based on the novel
Mendel Philipson and Son
by Henri Nathansen

Director of Photography

Jørgen Persson

In colour

Steadicam Operator

Jacob Bonfils

Editor

Grete Moldrup

Art Director

Peter Høimark

Set Design

Magnus Magnusson

Set Decorator

Ivar Baungaard

Music/Music Extracts

"Højby's Theme"
by Hans-Erik Philip;
"Jonas" by and
performed by
Wolfgang Plagge;
"Du bist die ruhe"
by Franz Schubert,
performed by Kristian
Flor, Sanne Grangaard;
"Der Wanderer"
by Franz Schubert,
performed by Kristian
Flor; "String Quintet 2"
by Franz Schubert,
performed by Arve
Tellefsen (violin);
"Contratanz" by Franz
Schubert, performed
by Wolfgang Plagge
(piano); "Chanson
Russe - Mavra" by Igor
Stravinsky, performed
by Arve Tellefsen, Kjell
Baekkelund; "Violin
Concerto" by J.S. Bach,
performed by Oslo
Chamber Music
Festival Orchestra;
"Goldberg Variations"
by J.S. Bach, performed
by Glenn Gould
(piano); "Overture
to *Maskerade*" by Carl
Nielsen, performed
by Svenske Radio
Symfoniorkester;
"Kol Nidrei Op. 47" by
Max Bruch, performed
by Pierre Fournier
(violinello), Orchestre
Lamoureux

Violin Solos Performed by
Arve Tellefsen

Music Supervisor

Arve Tellefsen

Costume Design

Jette Termann

Make-up

Cecilia Drott-Norlen

Titles

Michael Nielsen

Sound Design

Michael Dela

Sound Editor

John Nielsen Nalle

Dolby stereo

Jewish Consultant

Bent Lexner

Cast

Karen-Lise Mynster

Sofie

Ghita Nørby

Frederikke

Erland Josephson

Semmy

Jesper Christensen

Højby

Torben Zeller

Jonas

Henning Moritzen

Frederick Philipson

Stig Hoffmeyer

Gottlieb

Kirsten Rolffes

Jonas' Mother

Lotte Herman

Aunt Pulle

Jonas Oddermose

Aron age 3

David Naym

Aron age 7

Jacob Allon

Aron age 12

Kasper Barfoed

Aron age 18

Anne Werner Thomsen

Rose Philipson

Sanne Grangaard

Fanny Philipson

Elna Brodthagen

Sofie's Grandmother

Elin Reimer

Belse

Lone Herman

Malle

Peter Hesse Overgaard

Harry Hirsch

Peter Schroder

Lagen

John Hahn-Peterson

Colin

Hardy Raen

Larsen

Mari Maustad

Josephine

Claus Bue

Kelner

Bent Lexner

Rabbi

Daniel Hertz

Julius

Anna Szaif

Dina age 9

Lea Louise Leitner

Dina age 6

Anette Lutchen-Lehn

Mrs Hjortekar

Johannes Vabensted

Pianist

13,643 feet

152 minutes

Subtitles

Late nineteenth-century Copenhagen. Sofie is a sensitive, sensual Jewish woman, still single in her late twenties, who fears that life is passing her by. Her parents are merchants - respectable, but paupers compared to her uncle, who has changed his name and assimilated. Invited to a reception at her rich uncle's house, Sofie attracts the attention of Højby, a famous painter who is a gentile. He asks to paint her parents, and the resulting portrait, a study in proud Jewish isolationism, is shown at the academy. Sofie and Højby fall in love, but her family do not want her to marry outside the faith. Jonas, a lugubrious distant cousin, visits on business and endeavours to court her. Against her wishes, Sofie is manoeuvred into marrying him. Her break-up with Højby is painful, as she is forced to make a quick exit to preserve her modesty.

She leaves home to set up house with Jonas, whose circumstances are less comfortable than expected. Her husband proves incapable in many respects and spends all his time with his mother, whose eventual death only accelerates his descent into madness. Their young son Aron is Sofie's only comfort in a loveless marriage, and a prolonged flirtation with her married brother-in-law is on the point of consummation when Jonas appears and tries to rape her. She manages to fight him off, and has him committed to a mental institution where he lapses into a trance.

Sofie returns home to live with her aged parents. Aron grows up weaned on tradition at his grandfather's favourite teahouse. Scandal hits the family when the rich uncle goes out of business. Sofie goes to the dispersal auction in search of Højby's painting of her parents, which he had bought, and wins a bidding war against Højby, who is very angry. Her parents die, and Sofie runs the family business from their house. Aron, now an adult, tells her that he cannot live the traditional life and leaves to make his way in the outside world.

Liv Ullmann's directorial debut starts in surprisingly breezy fashion. There is a fair amount of humour, some amusing dialogue of the "Let me pass you the stuffed goose

neck" variety, and a measure of not quite suppressed eroticism. Sofie is almost comically over-ripe - "yearning for something that may never come", she rubs herself lasciviously up against the walls of her room - and Højby is a worthy would-be seducer. Building on the basic theme of "come up and see my etchings", he dispenses some of the greatest chat-up lines in Scandinavian history.

Unfortunately, all this is too good to last. After 40 minutes or so the film seems to remember itself, and lurches regrettably towards the gratuitous miserabilism of Bergmanesque stereotype. The heavy-lidded, soup-eyed character of Jonas genuinely engages sympathy. But his descent from a figure of Dickensian pathos to bestial lunatic is so depressing that by the end, the audience envies his comatose state. Sofie's slimy and dishonest affair with Jonas' brother strips her character too of any dignity, and the scene of sexual violence with which things come to a head is of such graphic nastiness as to thoroughly cloud over the film's painterly sheen.

Sofie takes an eternity to wind down from this ugly climax. Ullmann's original script was just over eight hours long, and it feels as though she's expanded rather than cut it. At the end, when Sofie meets Højby at the auction, hopes of a surprise happy ending are cruelly dashed. The remorselessness with which the principal character is steered away from felicity is intended to demonstrate her inner strength, but in fact it only undermines the film's good points.

The performances throughout are of a very high quality - Erland Josephson and Ghita Nørby in particular shine as Sofie's parents, but that may be because their quiet, untragic, almost happy characters come as a relief. The background, too, is well rendered with conscientious subtitling that fills in non-Danish speakers on every little detail, right down to a newspaper advert for ladies' hats. The Denmark of a century ago turns out to be an interesting setting: the film's social and religious side-dishes of Scandinavian language battles and concern with entryism from the Jewish perspective are more nutritious than its melodramatic meat.

Ben Thompson



Lugubrious loves: Karen-Lise Mynster

Storyville

USA 1992

Director: Mark Frost

Certificate

15

Distributor

Arrow Films

Production Company

Davis Entertainment
Company

Executive Producers

John Davis

John Flock

Co-executive Producers

Les Lithgow

George Zecevic

Producers

David Roe

Edward R. Pressman

Co-producer

Evzen Kolar

Associate Producer

Chappy Hardy

Production Co-ordinator

Paddy Cullen

Unit Production Manager

Robert D. Simon

Unit Manager

Cevin Cathall

Location Managers

Peter Wilson

Dana Hanby

Post-production Supervisor

Frank Salvino

Casting

Johanna Ray

New Orleans:

Anne Massey

Assistant Directors

Deepak Nayar

Randy N. Barbee

Screenplay

Mark Frost

Lee Reynolds

Based on the novel

Juryman by

Frank Galbally.

Robert Macklin

Director of Photography

Ron Garcia

In colour

Camera Operator

Sean Doyle

Steadicam Operator

Bruce Greene

Video Camera Operator

Thomas E. Conrad

Editor

B.J. Sears

Production Designer

Richard Hoover

Art Director

Kathleen M. McKernin

Set Decorator

Brian Kasch

Set Dressers

James D. Riewer

Jenny Baum

Dale Janni

Amy Vanderbeck

Eric Whittaker

Draughtsman

Jacqueline Miro

Storyboard Artist

David Lux

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Lyn Caudle

Special Effects

Steve Krieger

Music

Carter Burwell

Music Performed by

Guitar:

David Torn

Percussion:

Geoffrey Gordon

Music Supervisor

Jolene Cherry

Music Editor

Adam Smalley

Songs

"When it's Sleepy

Time Down South"

by Clarence Muse,

Leon Rene, Otis Rene,

performed by (1) New

Leviathan Oriental

Foxtrot Orchestra. (2)

Louis Armstrong and

his Orchestra; "Girls
of the South" by Leo
P. Wheat; "Transister"
by Bernard Zette,
Gary Parky, performed
by Zette

Costume Design

Louise Frogley

Costume Supervisor

Deborah Latham

Make-up

Allison Gordin

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

James Beshears

Sound Editors

Kirk Schuler

Trevor Jolly

Fred Judkins

David Kern

Mark Ormandy

Sound Recordist

Stephen Halbert

ADR Recordists

Alan Holly

Dean St. John

Foley Recordist

Tom Gonta

Sound Re-recordist

Leslie Shatz

Foley Artist

Robert R. Rutledge

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jerry Spicer

Stunts

Joe Dunne

Kurt Bryant

Phillip L. Tomalin Jr

Dennis "Danger"

Madalone

Hayward M. Gaude

Following the death of his father, young New Orleans lawyer Cray Fowler is running for Congress with the backing of his powerful uncle, Clifford Fowler. At a campaign garden party, he receives an invitation from a mysterious woman to see her that evening in a local bar called Storyville. After meeting, they return to her apartment and have sex. A few days later the woman, Lee, tells Cray that her father videotaped them, intending to blackmail him. When Cray confronts her father, a fight ensues and Cray is knocked unconscious. He awakens to find Lee's father dead and flees. Lee is arrested and charged with the murder, but Cray decides to act as her attorney.

Cray also begins to unearth details of a crooked land deal that created his family's wealth. Initially he believes that his father, who committed suicide three years earlier while under investigation, was guilty. But as he probes deeper, he suspects that his father was innocent. Cray's authoritative performances in court are soon reflected in the opinion polls. As the trial reaches its conclusion, he introduces a key witness – a transvestite who was present in Lee's building on the night of the shooting, and who implicates Trevalian, a local cop sympathetic to Cray's political opponent Avner Hollister. In a rage, Trevallian attempts to shoot the witness but is himself shot dead.

After the incident, Hollister withdraws from the race with the video oddly unused. But on election night, with victory assured, Cray discovers that Clifford is his real father. It becomes clear that Clifford had actually murdered his brother, Cray's assumed father, when he discovered details of Clifford's land deals three years earlier. Cray also realises that Clifford was responsible for the blackmail tape and forces him to return it. Clifford soon after commits suicide.

After his having worked so closely with David Lynch, as co-creator of the extraordinary *Twin Peaks* TV/film output, it's inevitable that Mark Frost's debut as feature director will be compared to his earlier writing work. Unfair as this may seem, it highlights the degree to which Frost has failed to match *Twin Peaks'* insouciant eccentricity and adeptness in reworking its varying strands of soap opera, horror and melodrama.

While *Storyville* does attempt a certain degree of weirdness and a kind of genre mix 'n' match, the final result is a straightforward and lacklustre pot-boiler, composed of disparate elements with little dynamic coherence. At the heart of the film lies Spader's featureless performance as the hopeful young congressman, diluting with its weakness the thematic resonance that Frost is aiming for.

With a script that conflates familial betrayal and public corruption, *Storyville* restlessly bounces back and forth from courtroom drama to political thriller to family melodrama, keen to try out all the options. Yet this eagerness for generic plenitude is never matched by a willingness to use these various elements in anything but a lethargically standard form. Ironically, *Storyville's* unadventurousness in this respect is reminiscent of American prime-time television – which is exactly the context in which *Twin Peaks* made its mark.

Amplifying still further the film's lack of distinctiveness is the sweaty presence of a New Orleans milieu. Frost's use of the city to evoke a sense of sleaze, sex and corruption is well-worn (cf. *The Big Easy*, *Down By Law*, *Blaze*), and he only succeeds in reducing the exotic accents, the white linen suits and the crumbling buildings to a set of tired clichés that undermine some of the film's more interesting ideas. These include a tentative exploration of the notion of a past constantly working on the present, on both a personal and a national level; it is even suggested that the father-son relationship of Cray and Clifford, a product of repressed greed and sex, is played out on a grander scale by the South and the rest of America. Yet this mixture of psychology, sexuality and the family is again nothing new, having been worked through far more coherently by 50s and 60s Hollywood.

Finally, echoing its own mixture of different genres, *Storyville's* visual styling – sparse camera movements, extended takes and discordant music – is a curious melange of art and mainstream Hollywood cinema, indicative of Frost's pretensions to seriousness and his apparent fondness for popular aesthetics. Both of these approaches are plainly present in *Storyville*, but Frost has failed to come up with a suitable peg on which to hang them.

Jason Drake



Goin' courtin': James Spader, Charlotte Lewis

Super Mario Brothers

USA 1993

Directors: Rocky Morton, Annabel Jankel

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Entertainment
Production Companies
Lightmotive/
Allied Filmmakers
In association with
Cinergi productions
Producers
Jake Eberts
Roland Joffé
Co-producer
Fred Caruso
Associate Producer
Brad Weston
Production Executive
Lightmotive:
Lenny Young
Production Supervisor
Maurice Lospinosa
Production Office
Co-ordinator
Jonathan Cornick
Unit Production Managers
Fred Caruso
2nd Unit:
Petter A. Runfalo
Location Co-ordinator
Pat Hill
2nd Unit Directors
James Devis
Dean Semler
Casting
Mali Finn
Don Finn
Associate:
Emily Schweber
Assistant Directors
Louis D'Esposito
Robert Rothbard
Stephanie Adams
Darryl Frank
J. Alan D'Esposito
J. Anthony Hopkins
Cynthia Williams
Screenplay
Parker Bennett
Terry Runté
Ed Solomon
Story
Based on the concept
and characters created
by Shigeru Miyamoto.
Takashi Tezuka of
Nintendo
Director of Photography
Dean Semler
Widescreen
Colour
Technicolor
2nd Unit Director
of Photography
James Devis
Visual Effects Director
of Photography
Charles A. Schuman
Camera Operator
Douglas Ryan
Steadicam Operator
Bob Ulland
B:
Bob Ulland
Visual Effects Designer/
2nd Unit Director
Christopher Francis
Woods
Visual Effects
Co-ordinators:
Dawn Guinta
Ilad Mamikunian
Editor:
J.W. Kompare
Opticals
Pacific Title
& Art Studio
Concept/Matte Artist
Robert Scifo
Matte Artist
Jesse Silver
Graphic Artist
William Neff
Lead Digital Animator/
Composer
Peter Webb

Digital Animation/
Composers
Ann Monn
Sheena Duggal
Shannon Noble
Donna Tracy
Martine Tomczyk
Diane Piepol
Morph/Animation
Supervisor
Brian Jennings
Particle Animation
Darren Kiner
Software Development/
Animation
Kevin Björke
Digital Rotoscopers
Candace Lewis
Edith Paul
Roderick Schumacher
Doyle Smith
Yoshi/Koopa
Creature/Goombas
Creature
Designer/Supervisor
Patrick Tatopoulos
Goombas/Allosaurus
Creatures
Make-up & Effects
Laboratories
Yoshi Creature
Sculptor/Supervisor:
Mark Maitre
Mechanical Special
Effects:
Dave Nelson
Koopa Creature
Prosthetic/Cosmetic
Skin Supervisor:
Rob Burman
Mechanical Animation
Supervisor:
Bud McGrew
Slomper Boots/
Fossils/Egg Sculptors:
Nalo Enterprises
Editors
Mark Goldblatt
Film:
Caroline Ross
Production Designer
David L. Snyder
Art Directors
Walter P. Martishius
2nd Unit:
Sarah E. Knowles
Set Design
Timothy Galvin
John P. Goldsmith
Geoffrey S. Grimsman
Clare Scarpulla
Kathleen Sullivan
Tim Eckel
Nancy Mickelberry
Barton Jones
Set Decorators
Beth Rubino
John Kretschmer
Set Dressers
William Alford
Charlene Hamer
Russell Jones
Eric Skipper
2nd Unit:
Bruce Seymour
Conceptual Artist
Patrick Tatopoulos
Scenic Artists
Brian Stultz
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Paul Lombardi
Special Effects Foremen
Bob Willard
Michael Menzel
Charles Stewart
Frank Toro
Music
Alan Silvestri
Orchestrations
William Ross
Music Supervisors
Peter Afterman
Associate:
Elizabeth Wendel

Music Editor
Kenneth Karman
Songs
"Almost Unreal" by
Per Gessle, performed
by Roxette; "Walk the
Dinosaur" by Randy
Jacobs, David Was,
Don Was, performed
by The Goombas,
George Clinton; "Love
Is the Drug" by Bryan
Ferry, Andy Mackay,
performed by diVinyls;
"I Would Stop the
World" by Mick Lesson,
Peter Vale, performed
by Charles & Eddie;
"Where Are You
Going?" by
Nuno Bettencourt,
performed by Extreme;
"Speed of Light"
by and performed
by Joe Satriani;
"Breakpoint" by Dave
Mustaine, Dave
Ellefson, Nick Menza,
performed by
Megadeth; "Tie Your
Mother Down" by
Brian May, performed
by Queen; "Cantaloop"
by Herbie Hancock,
Kelly Rabsaan, Geoff
Wilkinson, Mel
Simpson, performed
by US3, Rabsaan,
Gerrard Presencer;
"I Want You" by
Donnie Wahlberg,
Spice, performed by
Marky Mark and the
Funky Bunch, Trez;
"Somewhere My Love"
by Maurice Jarre, Paul
Webster, performed by
Frankie Yankovic
Choreography
Barry Lather
Costume Design
Joseph Porro
Costume Supervisor
Christi Work
Make-up Artists
Jeff Goodwin
Sandra S. Orsolyak
Amy L. Snyder
2nd Unit:
Herita Jones
Prosthetic Make-up
Vincent J. Guastini
Hair
Michelle Johnson
Hairstylists
Shelly Hutchins
Katherine Rees
Main Title Animation
Valerie Lettera
Supervising Sound Editors
Jerry Ross
Hamilton Sterling
Sound Editors
Hugo Weng
Alison Fisher
Karen Wilson
Supervising ADR Editor
Susan Dudeck
ADR Editors
Lauren Palmer
Jerelyn J. Harding
Renee Tondelli
Corinne Sessarego
Kimberly Harris
Foley Editors
Mark Pappas
Steve Richardson
Sound Recordists
Richard Van Dyke
2nd Unit:
Whit Norris
Music:
Dennis S. Sands
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Steve Maslow
Gregg Landaker
Sound Effects Editors
John Joseph Thomas
John Edwards-Younger
Michael J. Benavente
Bob Newlan
John Larson
Foley Artists
Dan O'Connell
Gary Hecker

Stunt Co-ordinators
Gary Jensen
2nd Unit:
Warren Stevens
Stunts
Billy Bates
John Casino
Doug Coleman
Liza Coleman
Peter Epstein
John Gillespie
Solita Hanna
Bob Havice
Ben P. Jensen
Erhan J. Jensen
Jennifer Lamb
Terry Leonard
Cole McKay
Candi Orsini
Cast
Bob Hoskins
Mario Mario
John Leguizamo
Luigi Mario
Dennis Hopper
King Koopa
Samantha Mathis
Daisy
Fisher Stevens
Iggy
Richard Edson
Spike
Rona Shaw
Lena
Dana Kaminski
Daniella
Mojo Nixon
Toad
Gianni Russo
Scapelli
Francesca Roberts
Bertha
Lance Henriksen
The King
Sylvia Harman
Old Lady
Desiree Marie Velez
Angelica
Andrea Powell
Heather Pendergast
Melanie Salvatore
Brooklyn Girls
John Fifer
Goomba Toad
Don Lake
Sergeant Simon
Terry Finn
Hat Check Girl
Thomas Mordis
Michael Harding
Michael Lynch
Scott Mactavish
Wallace Merck
Goombas
Mona E. Fierro
Karen Brigman
Christi Work
Joy Rees
Lucy Alpaugh
Nuns
Robert Raliford
TV Announcer
Harry Murphy
Patti Noday
Reporters
Robert Lee Edwards
Ronald Lou Edwards
Scapelli Bodyguards
Matthew Zachary Hopkins
Pizza Delivery Boy
Robert Faulkner Priest
Egon
Preston Lane
James
Jim Asaki
Matt Nikko
Japanese Businessmen
Kevin West
Devo Controller
Jeffrey Pillars
Devo Technician
Frank Welker
Creature Voices
Dan Castellenetta
Narrator
Corey
Chimpanzee

9,381 feet
104 minutes

Sixty-five million years ago, a crashing meteorite split life on earth into two dimensions – our own, and a reptilian world where dinosaurs never became extinct, and humanoids evolved directly from them. Twenty years ago, Daisy, an infant princess, was smuggled across the dimensions from Dinohattan to New York, to escape the tyrannical King Koopa, who had seized power by de-evolving her father King Bowser into fungus.

Now grown up, but unaware of her status and bearing no sign of her origins except a pendant made from a piece of meteorite, Daisy is a student dinosaur researcher, bravely standing up to the Mob, whose construction project is being disrupted by her fossil find. At the dig, a passage-way has opened up between the dimensions, and Koopa's henchmen Iggy and Spike come through it, kidnapping women indiscriminately in their search for Daisy. Koopa needs her pendant to help him merge the two worlds, so he can take over our natural resources. Unfortunately for him, Daisy has just been befriended by two resourceful plumbers, Mario Mario and his younger brother Luigi Mario, who has fallen in love with her.

When Daisy is captured and dragged off to Koopa's world to be imprisoned with the other kidnapped women (including Mario's girlfriend Daniella) the Marios give chase. The pendant is stolen by a large and frightening woman, Big Bertha, who eventually helps the Marios to evade Koopa's reptilian stormtroopers, the Goombas. Fed up with Iggy and Spike's bungling, Koopa has put his de-evolution machine into reverse, and rendered them super-intelligent. Their newfound wisdom leads them too to opt to help the Marios.

Koopa's jealous paramour Lena gets hold of the pendant and attempts to merge the two worlds, but only Daisy can harness its power, and Lena is killed. After an epic struggle, and with the help from the benign fungus that enshrouds the city, Koopa is defeated by Luigi and Mario and de-evolved first to Tyrannosaurus and then to slime. King Bowser is restored to humanity and throne, and the Marios return to Brooklyn as heroes – dubbed "The Super Mario Brothers" by a TV newscaster – though Luigi is sad to be separated from his beloved Daisy by her royal obligations. Life seems to be back to normal when Daisy arrives at the brothers' apartment, calling them back for another adventure.

What upsets people most about the idea of this film is the failure of cinematic nerve it seems to embody; it's as if Hollywood had decided it can't beat the Japanese game giants and their sinister hold over our healthy Western youth, so it might as well join them. It is more constructive to see *Super Mario Bros* as its makers are inclined to, "In the great tradition of comic book superheroes come to life". When producer Roland Joffe watched his son playing the Nintendo game on

which the film is surprisingly loosely based, "It began to seem like a very creative thing to try to bring these cultural icons to life and dramatise the imaginary world of their adventures". If it keeps Mr Joffe from making more overblown tosh like *The Mission*, then who are we to argue?

Product placement has taken the cinema by stealth. In the case of *Super Mario Bros*, the reverse is true. The welcome surprise of this film is that it doesn't just slavishly obey the dictates of the game-deviser's peculiar imaginations. The plot does embody the freedom from logic that is one of the game-world's biggest selling points, but it does so in a surprisingly cinematic way. Production designer David Snyder's boast that "There are more than 100 game elements in the film, waiting to be counted by keen-eyed and dedicated fans" will make hearts sink among non-devotees, but movie train-spotters not suffering from Nintendo finger might derive just as much pleasure from ticking off the absurd number of film references from a checklist including *Robocop*, *Superman*, *Star Wars* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

This obsessive allusiveness is obviously not a good thing in itself, and the film would have been more fun if directors Morton and Jankel had attempted to fashion a serious emotional drama around the raw material of the Mario story. But genuine inventiveness occasionally rears its head among the blockbusting detritus. Dinohattan in particular, though rather weakly-named, turns out to be an urban dystopia worthy of Ridley Scott or Richard Stanley, and also a subversive hint at what our own cities are going to end up looking like if we continue wasting all our fossil fuels playing video games.

One and a half square miles of plywood went into the making of *Super Mario Bros*, and that was just for the performances. Dennis Hopper, the arch villain with the amphibian's tongue and the 'Punk's not dead' haircut, is the only one who really enjoys himself. He seems to actively relish the absurd amount of exposition he is contracted to supply – investing lines like "Muster the Goombas!" with existential significance. Bob Hoskins, on the other hand, sleepwalks through the lead, but then he's seen all this before with *Roger Rabbit*.

The film's younger stars John Leguizamo (*Hangin' with the Homeboys*) and Samantha Mathis (*Pump up the Volume*) have yet to establish themselves so firmly and it is to be hoped they have not done lasting damage to their promising careers with the terminally wet Luigi and Daisy. She is initially fine in the Princess Lea role, but struggles a bit once forced out of her feisty student garb and into a less than empowering purple night-dress. Worse still, she is also obliged to befriend a cute dinosaur called Yoshi. Leguizamo at least gets to deliver *Super Mario Bros*' great rallying cry to the children of the world – "Trust the Fungus!"

Ben Thompson

Tango

France 1993

Director: Patrice Leconte

Certificate

15

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Cinéa/Hachette

Première et Cie

In association with

TFI Films/Zoulou films

With the participation

of Soficas/Sofinergie/

Canal Plus

Co-producers

Philippe Carcassonne

René Cleitman

Production Co-ordinators

Françoise Della Libera

Nicole Roland

Production Manager

Henri Brichetti

Assistant Director

Etienne Dhaene

Screenplay

Patrice Leconte

Screen Collaborator

Patrick Dewolf

Director of Photography

Eduardo Serra

Widescreen

35mm scope

In colour

Aerial Photography

Charlet Recors

Editor

Geneviève Winding

Production Designer

Ivan Maussion

Special Effects

Bernard Chevreul

Jean-Pierre Suchet

Blue Screen

Microfilms:

Frédéric Moreau

Music

Angélique Nachon

Jean-Claude Nachon

Music Extracts

"Ride of the Valkyries"

by Richard Wagner,

performed by the

Leningrad

Philharmonic

Orchestra

Songs

"Traçion" by

Angélique Nachon,

performed by Reynaldo

Anselmi; "Tassouma

Mosso" by Angélique

Nachon, performed by

Djaby Key; "Arabesque"

by Angélique Nachon,

Jean-Claude Nachon

Costume Design

Cécile Magnan

Wardrobe

Anne-Marie Dréan

Yvette Bonnay

Make-up

Judith Gayo

Eric Pierre

Sound Editor

Patrice Grisolet

Sound Recordists

Pierre Lenoir

Jérôme Lévy

Additional:

Daniel Ollivier

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Dominique Hennequin

Jacques Lévy

Stunts

Roland Neunreuther

Alain Guerillot

Subtitles

Nigel Palmer

Subtitling

C.M.C. Paris

Cast

Philippe Noiret

François (L'Élégant)

Richard Bohringer

Vincent

Thierry Lhermitte

Paul

Carole Bouquet

Female Guest

Jean Rochefort

Bell-hop

Miou-Miou

Marie

Judith Godrèche

Madeleine

Michèle Laroque

Vincent's Wife

Maxime Leroux

Vincent's Wife's Lover

Laurent Gamelon

Taxi Driver

Jacques Mathou

Lorry Driver

Isabelle Wolfe

Girl in the Station

Caroline Clerc

Marie's Mother

Sandra Extercatte

Waitress

Muriel Combeau

Elodie Bouchez

Pascale Pouzadoux

Girls in Aeroplane

Yamine Dib

Aeroplane Mechanic

Eric Béranger

Gunsmith

Françoise Baut

Driver

Antony Cointre

Madeleine's Mother

Jean-Claude Dumas

8,071 feet

90 minutes

Subtitles

Vincent, an amateur aviator, suspects his wife Hélène is seeing her lover while he is out flying. He follows his rival in his car and runs him off the road, killing him. Hélène tries to run away, but Vincent gives her flowers and apologises for forgetting their anniversary. He offers to give her a spin in his plane as a treat, but during the flight he loops the loop and Hélène falls to her death. Vincent is tried for murder but found not guilty.

Paul's wife Marie takes a lover as a revenge for his infidelities, then walks out on her outraged and humiliated husband. Paul goes to visit his uncle François (nicknamed 'l'Élégant') for advice; François suggests that the only solution to his agonies is to kill Marie. He takes Paul out to meet Vincent and demands that Vincent do the deed. François was the judge on Vincent's case and has evidence that he withheld at the trial since he admired Vincent's act and wanted to let him free; effectively blackmailed, Vincent is obliged to go along with François' plans.

The three men drive off together in search of Marie. In a cafe, Vincent sees a beautiful woman sitting glumly with an old and rather ugly man. Just as he is commenting how unjust their relationship seems, the woman produces a gun and kills her partner. The men run off, taking the woman, Madeleine, with them. They explain their quest to her, and she asks if one of the men will sleep with her, since she wants a baby; Vincent obliges. Madeleine leaves and the men continue their journey.

They go to Marie's mother's house, and she tells them that Marie has gone to Africa. They decide to follow her there, tracking over land. Stopping off at a hotel, they place bets over dinner on the prospect of one of them escorting a certain female guest to her bedroom. Paul volunteers, approaches her, then secretly informs her of the bet. The woman finds the idea so laughable that she agrees to play along. When she and Paul get to her bedroom, however, she turns the table on him and invites him in.

The next morning, Paul is confronted by the bell-hop who has been standing guard outside the woman's bedroom; it transpires that he is her husband. The three continue their journey. Paul thinks he sees Marie in a truck; chasing after her, they become involved in a road duel, wrecking the car on the way, but it turns out that Paul was mistaken. Vincent expresses his worries about killing Marie, but François tells him that he is obliged to perform the task. The three men fly to Africa and find Marie working at a refugee camp. At the last moment Paul decides that she should live, but François dictates otherwise. Vincent approaches Marie, quickly explains the situation to her and then pretends to shoot her. The three men return to France and set up house together. One day Vincent bumps into Marie at the local supermarket. She enquires about Paul. Later she turns up at their house and is happily re-united with her husband; the two dance a tango. ►



Dancing fool: Richard Bohringer

“You dance well for a misogynist,” comments Madeleine of the portly François’ nifty footwork. “Who says I’m a misogynist?” is his crusty rejoinder. I could lob a variation on this comment to Patrice Leconte – “You make quite a good film for a misogynist” – and no doubt he would give the same reply. Of course Leconte is obsessed by men who are obsessed with women. His last two films – *Monsieur Hire* and *The Hairdresser’s Husband* – are immaculately framed claustrophobic encounters, their sad and inadequate protagonists fetishizing some female facet whether it be the glimpse of the girl in the curtained window across the way or the heady smell of the coiffeuse. There is no sense of individuality about these obscure objects of desire as they are reduced to some feminine essence (indeed in *The Hairdresser’s Husband*, it seems that any clipper-wielding woman will do). In the picaresque and much lighter *Tango*, it is ultimately a concept of ‘woman’ that Paul, Vincent and François are on the trail of. They hurl their generalizations and accusations towards the second sex in its various manifestations, as they trek down to ‘Africa’ (Marie finds a job working for the noble cause of ‘Doctors Without Frontiers’). The presence of Carole Bouquet, France’s icon of Chanel sophistication, even suggests a discreet nod to Bunuel’s *That Obscure Object Of Desire*, which also foregrounded the same conundrum by having one woman dissolving into another.

But it is too easy to dismiss *Tango* on feminist grounds, since it is so cheeky, so full and aware of itself. Leconte knowingly crams the scripts with lines that are likely to rankle. Take offence at lines like “women are fantastic as long as we don’t have to live with them”, or “every man gets caught for the pleasure between the legs”, and one might have missed the point. But the joke is on the boys stuck in their

one-track minds, determined to have a good time on the road. For *Tango* is a film about men who love the idea of women so much that they are driven to distraction, potentially even murder by them. Mad love. Mad men. Paul, Vincent and François are presented as a trio of irascible eccentrics (roles that Thierry Lhermitte, Philippe Noiret and Richard Bohringer tuck into with gusto). Vincent bombs about in his flying machine, indignantly ditches his unfaithful wife in a loop-the-loop but, it transpires later, is scared of heights. Paul is an inveterate womanizer with the most appalling chat-up lines – “When I look at you I wish she’d (Marie) been run over by a bus.” Indeed he would rather his wife were dead than suffer the humility of having her leave him. It’s an idea that elicits the support and encouragement of the elder statesman Judge François, who believes that wife-killing doesn’t constitute murder and who, with only his cat Sandrine at his beck and call, takes a prurient interest in the emotional affairs of others. A pitiable bunch, really. The women who intermittently crop up in the film are more sympathetic, even when they are given the thinnest brush strokes of characterisation. And at least Madeleine and the nameless hotel guest are allowed to twist the men’s expectations of them, take something from them and then take their leave (the latter’s pathetic bell-hop husband provides the oddest diversion in the film and proof to Paul that that way madness lies).

Following such an old and familiar tune, Leconte’s film is less the seductive tango, more of a foxy trot that trips up midway before sashaying to its conclusion. But for all its openness and knowingness, it’s one that I would rather sit out on. It’s just rather dull to go through the same old steps again, even if they are meant ironically.

Lizzie Francke

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III

USA 1992

Director: Stuart Gillard

Certificate

PG

Distributor

20th Century Fox
Production Company
Golden Harvest
presentation
In association with
Gary Propper
For Clearwater
Holdings Ltd
Executive Producer
Raymond Chow

Producers

Thomas K. Gray
Kim Dawson
David Chan

Co-producer

Terry Morse

Associate Producer

Roberta Chow

Production Executive

Marlene Pivnick

Production Associate

Peter D. Steinbroner

Production Controller

John W. Stuart

Production Co-ordinator

Annette Serena

Unit Production Manager

Art Levinson

Additional

2nd Unit Director

Terry J. Leonard

Casting

Oregon:

A.M. Casting Associates

Assistant Directors

D. Scott Easton

John G. Scott

Terry J. Leonard

Screenplay

Stuart Gillard

Based on characters

created by Kevin

Eastman, Peter Laird

Director of Photography

David Gurfinkel

Colour

Technicolor

Additional Photography

Chuck Colwell

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Rexford Metz

Optical Photography

Scott Sohan

Paul Howarth

Camera Operators

Joseph D. Steuben

2nd Unit:

Leo Napolitano

Jay Nefcy

Visual Effects

Perpetual Motion

Pictures

Supervisors:

Jeffrey A. Okun

Richard Malzahn

Executive Producer:

Charles L. Finance

Production

Co-ordinator:

Robin D’Arcy

Opticals

Pacific Title

Howard A.

Anderson Co.

Supervisor:

Robert Habros

Matte Artist

Jesse Silver

Rotoscope/Animation

Heather Davis

Editors

William D. Gordean

James R. Symons

Production Designer

Roy Forge Smith

Art Director

Mayne Schuyler Berke

Set Decorator

Ronald R. Reiss

Scenic Artist

Toni J. Wolf

Special Effects

Special Effects

Unlimited

Special Effects Supervisors

Joseph P. Mercurio

2nd Unit:

Vince Montefusco

Special Effects Foremen

Werner Hahnlein

2nd Unit:

Steven Ficke

Creature Effects

All Effects Company

Supervisor:

Eric Allard

Co-supervisor:

Rick Stratton

Electronics Foreman:

Bob Wilcox

Mechanical Foreman:

Dwight Roberts

Shop Foreman:

Ralph Cobos

Costume Foreman:

Bill Bryan

Creature Shop

Co-ordinator:

Dawn Severdia

Chief Puppeteer

Gordon Robertson

Animatronic

Puppeteers:

Donatello:

Rick Lyon

Michaelangelo:

Gordon Robertson

Raphael:

Noel MacNeal

Leonardo:

Jim Martin

Splinter:

James Murray

Lisa Aimee Sturz

Tim Lawrence

Additional:

Eric Allard

Dwight Roberts

Special Armour

Precision Effects

Michael Hood

Music

John Du Prez

Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

Music Supervisors

Stu Cantor

Murray Deutch

Music Editor

Tom Kramer

Songs

“Can’t Stop Rockin’”

by Billy Gibbons,

Dusty Hill, Frank

Beard, performed by

ZZ Top; “Tarzan Boy”

by N. Hackett, M. Bassi,

performed by

Baltimora; “Conga”

by Enrique Elias

Garcia, performed

by The Barrio Boyzz;

“Rockin’ Over the Beat”

by Manuella Kamosi,

Jo Bogaert, performed

by Technotronic,

Ya Kid K

Costume Design

Additional:

Dodie Shepard

Costume Supervisor

Christine Heinz

2nd Unit:

Michelle Marie

Custance

Make-up Artists

Key:

Martha Cecilia

Additional:

R. Stephen Weber

Blake L. Shepard

2nd Unit:

Mary Kay Morse

Titles

Pacific Title

Sound Supervision

Larry Kemp

Lon E. Bender

Sound Editors

Richard Dwan Jnr

Marshall Winn

Supervising ADR Editor

Bill Voigtlander

ADR Editors

Laura Graham

Constance A. Kazmer

Sound Recordists

Robert Janiger

2nd Unit:

Giovanni Di Simone

Music:

Larry Mah

John Richards

ADR Recordist

Tanya Sharp David

Foley Recordist

Karin Ruolo

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Daniel Sperry

Supervising

Sound Re-recordist

Michael C. Casper

Sound Re-recordists

Daniel Leahy

Thomas Gerard

Sound Effects Editor

Victor Iorillo

Scott Martin Gershin

Dino DiMuro

Willy Allen

Mark A. Lanza

Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnof

Ellen Heuer

Technical Advisers

Lai Ho

Kar Leung Lau

David Lai

Japanese:

James Matsumoto

Martial Arts/

Stunt Co-ordinator

Pat E. Johnson

Stunts

David McKeown

Barbara Bernhardt

Will Cascio

Phil Chong

Danny E. Glover

Gary Lauder

Alan Liu

Bobby Lovgren

Anthony Marquez

William Morts

Ho Young Pak

Nick Palma

Jim Pratt

Danny Virtue

Mark Warrack

Horse:

Danny Virtue

Turtle Fight Doubles

Donatello:

Steven Ho

Leonardo:

Larry Lam

Raphael:

Ho Sung Pak

Michaelangelo:

Allan Shishir Inocalla

Cast

Elias Koteas

Casey Jones/

Whit Whitley

Paige Turco

April O’Neil

Stuart Wilson

Captain Dirk Walker

Sab Shimono

Lord Norinaga

Vivian Wu

Princess Mitsu

Mark Caso

Leonardo

Matt Hill

of a group of gun-running British pirates led by Captain Walker. Kenshin accidentally knocks over a golden sceptre identical to April's, which has the effect of transporting her back to 1603 and sending him forward to the present. Norinaga and the pirates suspect April of being a witch, and imprison her alongside Whit, a mutinous member of Walker's crew. The turtles go back in time to rescue April and in the process switch places with four of Norinaga's horsemen. Michaelangelo is separated from the group, and loses the sceptre when he is knocked out in a fall. The other three turtles sneak into Norinaga's castle, overcome the guards, and rescue April and Whit. Reunited with Michaelangelo at the rebel castle, the foursome join forces with the villagers to foil a pirate attack. Michaelangelo rescues a child, Yoshi, from a burning building and Leonardo revives the boy with the kiss of life. Michaelangelo presents Yoshi with a yo-yo and in return the child gives him the missing sceptre.

Whit - who was in league with Walker all along - steals the sceptre. The turtles and Mitsu follow him to the castle, where a final battle takes place. Norinaga is imprisoned by a huge bell that Leonardo drops on him. Whit has a change of heart, and refuses to obey Walker's orders to shoot the turtles. Walker attempts to escape with the sceptre, but falls to his death in the sea below when Whit catapults a fireball at him; the sceptre is retrieved by the turtles. Smitten by Mitsu, Michaelangelo is reluctant to return to the twentieth century, but goes when she tells him her future lies with Kenshin. Norinaga is reconciled with his son and the turtles arrive back in their own time to dance happily together.

● "Why didn't he make a splash, Mum?" The child in the row behind me at the preview screening is mystified by the abrupt fate (read: cheap special effects) of the villain Walker. He sinks without trace, and so too, much earlier, does any hint of wit and imagination in this decrepit adventure movie - which could be the only pirate film in which the pirates don't seem to be able to afford a ship.

The New York of the first *Ninja Turtles* movie was a murky, dangerous and, just occasionally, winningly bizarre environment. The first sequel was a notably blander affair, and now this lazy collection of second-hand ideas takes the removal of everything that was interesting in the original film a dismal stage further. Aimed wholeheartedly at the very youngest and least demanding of cinema-goers, the movie uses its time-travelling strategy merely as a device to get the heroes out of the morally ambiguous Big Apple and into the safely fantastic world of a children's pantomime.

Given their ninja skills, Japan is the logical place for them to go; however, rather than meeting any real historical characters, their own ancestors or alternative versions of themselves (plot devices variously used to good effect in

Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure, the *Back to the Future* films, and even the 1944 Tommy Handley vehicle *Time Flies*), the Turtles wisecrack and fight their way through a luminously threadbare and derivative storyline which repeatedly draws attention to its throwaway status by making weak jokes at the expense of other films. "Eat your heart out, Kurt Russell!" is a comment during the child rescue; "Don't you know Westerns are dead?" accompanies a limp Clint Eastwood visual gag during the attack on the village.

This story must be the thinnest of star vehicles for them, but a further problem for the turtles is the fact that, despite their different coloured headbands and fanciful names, none of them have ever been properly defined as separate individuals. The stuntmen in the green suits have varied from movie to movie and so too, significantly, have several of the actors providing their voices. That may be good for merchandising (same toy, different headband and weapon) and for keeping the film's budget down (the copyrighted characters are the stars, not the human beings playing them), but it's fatal in terms of focussing and keeping a young audience's attention. "Where's Shredder?" asked the same disconsolate little boy behind me, at one sagging point in the plot, hoping vainly for the easily identifiable villain of the first two films to show his face.

In a film aimed so single-mindedly at five-year-olds, it would be expecting too much to have the Turtles run into Townsend Harris (the John Wayne character in Huston's *The Barbarian and the Geisha*), the Seven Samurai, or a squadron of time-travelling kamikaze pilots. But surely, in a film set in Japan and featuring mutant ninja turtles, the most famous mutant monster of them all could have rated something more than this dead end of a mention: "What if we take a cosmic detour and end up in Godzilla-land?"

If only they had. Instead, the adventure is so lazy and so bland that it most resembles the pantomime segment of *Crackerjack!*, the long-running BBC TV show that ruined Friday afternoons for several generations of British kids. Every week that programme would feature the resident cast in a knockabout stage farce full of thuddingly obvious gags at the expense of contemporary pop stars, TV shows and movies. One really does have to think back that far to recall children's humour as lacklustre as this. And no-one even says "Cowabunga!" either.

Tom Tunney



Turtle recall

Three of Hearts

USA 1992

Director: Yurek Bogayevicz

Certificate

18

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

Three of Hearts Productions for New Line Cinema

Executive Producer

David Permut

Producers

Joel B. Michaels
Matthew Irmias

Co-producer

Hannah Hempstead

Associate Producer

Karen Teicher

Production Co-ordinators

Jeanne Joe

New York:

Livia Perez-Borrero

Production Manager

Elliott Lewis Rosenblatt

Unit Production Managers

Brenda Goodman

Alyse Bezahler

Location Managers

Eddy Collins

Dede Gardner

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Candace Cornell

Casting

Penny Perry

Annette Benson

Assistant Directors

Lisa Zimble

Cas Donovan

Lars Winther

Screenplay

Adam Greenman

Mitch Glazer

Story

Adam Greenman

Director of Photography

Andrzej Sekula

Colour

DeLuxe

prints by

Film House

Additional Photography

Steven Finestone

Camera Operators

Michael Levine

B:

Alan Sherrod

New York:

John Sosenko

Steadicam Operators

Rick Raphael

Kyle Rudolph

Video

Josh Medak

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Editors

Dennis M. Hill

LA:

Suzanne Hines

Production Designer

Nelson Coates

Art Director

Douglas Hall

Set Decorators

Linda Lee Sutton

New York:

Guido de Curtis

Set Dressers

Sam F. Huston

David Deignan

J.T. Thayer

Scenic Artists

Michael Thompson

Daigle

Peter Nagy

Music

Richard Gibbs

Music Supervisor

G. Mark Roswell

Music Editor

Will Kaplan

Songs

"Dinner For Two";
"Ave Maria" by Anton
Bruckner, performed
by La Chapelle Royale
Collegium Vocals;
"Gotta Make Up Your
Mind"; "Red Wine
Polka"; "Dream Samba"
by and performed
by Liliana Overman;
"Broke and Hungry";
"Crazy" by and
performed by Moe Z;
"Bye Bird" by Ronnie
Aspery; "Fashion
Victim"; "Performance
Piece" by Jan A.P.
Kaczmarek; "Wish
They Could Have
Stayed" by and
performed by Steve
Kowalczyk; "Never
Let You Go" by Todd
Bozung, Craig Portells,
performed by Suzan
Rivera; "I Need Love"
by and performed
by Sam Phillips

Costume Design

Barbara Tfrank

Wardrobe Supervisor

Yvonne Cervantes

New York:

Ingrid Price

Make-up

Sharon Ilson

Hair

Frida Aradottir

Title Design

Anthony Goldschmidt

Titles

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

Michael O'Farrell

Richard Cadger

Tony Currie

Michael Haight

ADR Group Co-ordinator

Burton Sharp

Sound Recordists

Stephen Halbert

New York:

William Saroking

Music:

Jeff Vaughn

Foley Recordist

Lou Solakofski

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Don White

Dave Appleby

Lou Solakofski

Sound Effects Editor

David Evans

Foley Artists

Andy Malcolm

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Jensen

Stunts

Donna Evans

Eric Norris,

John Robotham

Paul Short

Cast

William Baldwin

Joe Casella

Kelly Lynch

Connie Kazalke

Sherilyn Fenn

Ellen Matthews

Joe Pantoliano

Mickey

Gail Strickland

Yvonne

Cec Verrell

Allison

Claire Callaway

Isabella

Marek Johnson

Gail

Monique Mannen

Daphne

Timothy D. Strickney

Ralph

Frank Ray Perilli

Patient

Tony Amendola

Harvey

Keith MacKechnie

Frankie

Ann Ryerson

Woman Auditioning

Gloria Gifford

Jill Jarress

Ken Magee

Lin Shaye

Operators

Joshua Grenrock

Photographer

Jan A.P. Kaczmarek

Priest

Aleksandra Kaniak

Bride

Stanislaw Dziedzic

Groom

Maria Heggnes

Bride's Mother

Ebyslaw Kogut

Bride's Father

Liliana Overman

Lead Singer

Mitchell Group

Elevator Operator

Tawny Kitaen

Woman in Bar

Julie Lott

Nurse

Lynn A. Henderson

Student

Catherine Battistone

Lee Arnone-Briggs

Ed Berke

Pamela Clay

Alex Daniels

Mary Ellen Dunbar

Marilyn Madderom

Paul Pape

Peter Tomaszewicz

Janet Wood

Additional Voices

9,913 feet

110 minutes

● Joe, a New York gigolo, is warned by his pimp Mickey that their associate Harvey is out of jail and looking for Joe, whom he believes to have set him up. In the park, Ellen is breaking up with her girlfriend Connie. Heartbroken, Connie has no partner for her sister's wedding, where she had planned to introduce Ellen as her lover. She hires an escort, and Joe turns up for the job.

Connie's Polish family are delighted with her 'boyfriend'. When Joe offers sexual services, Connie explains she is a lesbian. She drops Joe home, but Harvey has trashed his flat. Connie invites Joe to stay with her, and tells him about Ellen. Joe tells her the bisexual Ellen will certainly get her heart broken by a man and come back to Connie; this gives her the idea of hiring Joe to do the heart-breaking. Joe enrolls in the English class Connie teaches. His assignment is to write a love letter; Connie plagiarises a poem for him which Ellen recognises, but she still falls for his sweet-talking. Connie contrives to run into them while they are on a date at the theatre, but Ellen tells Joe that she is no longer in love with Connie.

Joe can no longer bear to have sex with his clients because he is in love with Ellen. He sleeps with Ellen and tells Mickey he won't prostitute himself any longer. Enraged, Mickey tells Harvey where to find Joe. When Joe admits to Connie that he loves Ellen, she throws him out of her flat; at that moment, Harvey arrives and beats him up. Connie gets him to hospital and calls Ellen. Connie forces Joe to confess to Ellen about their arrangement; distraught, Ellen rejects them both. When Joe leaves hospital, Connie - who has accepted that Ellen won't return - encourages Joe to see her. Joe and Ellen are reunited.

● Which movie star does Ellen look like, wonder Connie and Joe - Vivien Leigh, Audrey Hepburn? Neither would have stooped to play drippy Ellen, and Sherilyn Fenn - at her best as the scheming Audrey in *Twin Peaks* - is likewise wasted in this cutesy role. The references to movies and acting run through *Three of Hearts*, a theme ▶

◀ that director Yurek Bogayevicz first developed in *Anna. Three of Hearts* plays with the idea of sexual masquerade, the ridiculous gap between the act and actuality. Joe's pimp Mickey runs a phone sex business, where a job interview involves simulating aural sex without the phone. Sexual performance – in all senses – is Joe's business. Even Connie, immune to his sex appeal, falls for his patter because he "knows women". He is less a prostitute than a paid sex therapist for older women with a taste for guns and suspenders. But when Joe meets dewy-eyed Ellen, William Baldwin loses his knowing grin and descends into dreary 'authenticity', cajoling us into believing that Joe is no longer acting – that this is the predictable real thing.

Three of Hearts may give a lesbian twist to a light romance, but underneath the sexual window dressing, it offers nothing we haven't seen before. Not that the idea is bad: Baldwin and Lynch, both in love with Sherilyn Fenn, share the role of pursuer, twisting the traditional 'male' role in a way that at its best is sharply revealing about sexual assumptions. In the end, it is Connie who – echoing Joe's claim – "knows women"; she knows that Ellen will forgive him. But there is never any real doubt about who will get the girl: the relationship between the two women finishes as the film begins. We see Connie and Ellen together only in home videos, cavorting in wholesome pyjamas. The film lacks the courage of its convictions, shy to show girls snogging. Few who protested after *Basic Instinct* about Hollywood's lack of sympathetic gay characters are likely to be appeased by Ellen taking off her glasses and falling, feminine once more, into Joe's arms.

Baldwin's double role as prostitute-turned-lover allows for the 'action' story, in which Joe is on the run from an old enemy. This unconvincing subplot has no use other than to forward the romantic narrative. It is a sure sign that the film is protesting too much, an over-compensation typical of Hollywood movies which are genuinely trying to work sexual roles into new stories, but are nervous of trampling on too many traditions at once (in the same way, *Three Men and a Cradle* had its three New Men reinforcing their masculinity by busting a drug ring while looking after baby). *Three of Hearts* tries for a glam-grunge *Singles* feel, where Lynch and Baldwin floss their teeth together and wear leather jackets. Lynch is congenially kooky in Bridget Fonda style, but Baldwin is just too slick to be believed.

Director Bogayevicz has style and a camera that suits it, the long takes whirling with the drunken dancers at the Polish wedding, giving the scene the joyous touch; but the charm simply doesn't flow off the screen as it did in Cameron Crowe's *Singles*. *Three of Hearts*, hesitant rather than wholehearted about its love story, never manages to close the gap between empathy and embarrassment.

Lucy Richer

Tom and Jerry: The Movie

USA 1992

Director: Phil Roman

Certificate
U

Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
Turner Entertainment Company
In association with
WMG

Executive Producers
Roger Mayer
Jack Petrik
Hans Brockmann
Justin Ackerman

Producer
Phil Roman

Co-Producer
Bill Schultz
Associate Producer
James Wang

Production Executives
Rocky Solotoff
WMG:
Su Lim

Production Supervisors
Lee Anne Kaplan
Taiwan/Thailand:
Lynn Hoag

Joellyn Marlowe
Production Co-ordinators
Monica Diane Mayall
Craig Sost

Production Managers
Michael Wolf
Jill S. Bauman

Post-production Supervisor
Barbara Beck

Live Action Director
Robert Fisher Jnr

Casting
Janet Hirshenson
Jane Jenkins

Roger Mussenden
Screenplay

Dennis Marks
Based on characters
created by William
Hanna, Joseph Barbera

Colour
CFI

Camera Supervisors
Taiwan/Thailand:
David Koenigsberg
Allen Foster

Video Operators
Gregory Hinde
Patrick Buchanan
Peter J. DeLuca
Cyndy (Heather)

Ingram
Robert Ingram

Sequence Directors
John Sparey
Monte Young

Bob Nesler
Adam Kuhlman

Eric Daniels
Jay Jackson

Skip Jones
Taiwan Supervising

Directors
James Miko

Aundre Knutson
Animation Director

Dale L. Baer
Effects Animation

Supervisor
Jeff Howard

Key Animators
J.K. Kim

Adam Dykstra
Dan Haskett

Adam Kuhlman
Kevin Petrillak

Kamoon Song
Kevin Wurzer

Animators
Eric Thomas

Art Roman
Doug Frankei

Tony Fucile
Steve Gordon

Leslie Gorin
Brian Robert Hogan

Gabi Payn
Irv Spence

Arnie Wong
David Courtland

Frederic DuChau
Darin Hilton

Sadao Miyamoto
David Nethery

Michael Polvani
Alejandro Reyes

Michael Toth
Larry Whitaker

Tomihiko Yamaguchi
Matthew Bates

Jon Hooper
Mark Koetsier

Dan Kuenster
Linda Miller

Mark Pudleiner
Chad Stewart

Bonita Versh
Effects:

Sean Applegate
George S. Chialtas

Corny Cole
Mark Dindal

Brett Hisey
John Huey

Craig Littell-Herrick
Gary McCarver

Mary Mullen
January Nordman

Computer Animation
Kroyer Films Inc

Mark M. Pompian
Brian Schindler

Animation Checking
Merle Welton

Jackie Banks
Lolee Aries

Layout
Ray Aragon

Andrew Austin
Peter J. DeLuca

Andy Gaskill
Ed Ghtner

Mike Hodgson
Gary L. Hoffman

Brad Landreth
Ken Mimura

Cliff Voorhees
Dean Thompson

Backgrounds
Michael Humphries

Bari Greenberg
Blue Sketch

Peter J. DeLuca
Colour Design

Phyllis Craig
Leslie Ellery

Colour Models
Debbie Mark

Belle Norman
Libby Reed

Brian Mark
Casey Clayton

Ink/Paint Supervisors
Taiwan/Thailand:

Karen Hudson
Maria Gonzales

Supervising Editor
Sam Horta

Editors
Julie Ann Gustafson

Video:
Noel Roman

Larry Swerdlove
Creative Consultants

Joe Barbera
David Simone

Art Directors
Michael Peraza Jnr

Michael Humphries
Storyboard

Andrew Austin
Brad Landreth

Marty Murphy
Keith Tucker

Monte Young
Phil Mendez

Mitch Schauer

Models

Michael Peraza Jnr
Jim Franzen

Leonard E. Johnson
David Nethery

Colour Model Supervisor
Phyllis Craig

Music
Henry Mancini

Music Performed By
National Philharmonic

Orchestra of London
Orchestrations

Henry Mancini
Jack Hayes

Music Supervisors
Sharon Boyle

Kathy Nelson
Music Editor

Stephen A. Hope
Songs

"Friends to the End"
by Henry Mancini,

Leslie Bricusse,
performed by Dana

Hill, Richard Kind,
Ed Gilbert, David L.

Lander; "What Do
We Care? (The Alleycat

Song)" by Henry
Mancini, Leslie

Bricusse, performed
by Raymond McLeod,

Mitchel Moore, Scott
Wojahn; "(Money is

Such) A Beautiful
Word" by Henry

Mancini, Leslie
Bricusse, performed

by Charlotte Rae,
Tony Jay; "God's Little

Creatures" by Henry
Mancini, Leslie

Bricusse, performed
by Henry Gibson;

"I Miss You (Robyn's
Song)" by Henry

Mancini, Leslie
Bricusse, performed

by Anndi McAfee;
"I've Done it All" by

Henry Mancini, Leslie
Bricusse, performed

by Rip Taylor, Howard
Morris; "I Miss You"

by Henry Mancini,
Leslie Bricusse,

performed by
Stephanie Mills;

"All in How Much We
Give" by Jody Davidson,

performed by
Stephanie Mills

Choreography
Lori Eastside

Title Design
Neal Thompson

Titles
Cinema Research

Corporation
Sound Editors

Tom Syslo
Thomas Jaeger

ADR Editor
Eileen Horta

Foley Editors
Ken D. Young

Robert N. Brown

Sound Recordists

Gordon Hunt
Music:

Alan Snelling
Foley Recordist

Cecilia Perna
Dolby stereo

consultant:
Thom Ehle

Sound Re-recordists
Dick Weaver

Joe Citarella
Don MacDougall

Sound Effects Editors
Mark R. Crookston

Michael Gollom
John O. Robinson III

Kevin D. Spears
Foley Artists

Eileen Horta
Debra O'Connor

Post-production Consultant
Arthur Klein

Voices
Richard Kind

Tom
Dana Hill

Jerry
Anndi McAfee

Robyn
Tony Jay

Lickboot
Rip Taylor

Captain Kiddie
Henry Gibson

Applecheek
Michael Bell

Ferdinand/Straycatcher
Ed Gilbert

Puggsy/Daddy Starling
David L. Lander

Frankie da Flea
Howard Morris

Squawk
Sydney Lassick

Straycatcher
Raymond McLeod

Alleycat/Bulldog
Mitchell D. Moore

Scott Wojahn
Alleycats

Tino Insana
Patrolman

Don Messick
Droopy

B.J. Ward
Woman's Voice

Greg Burson
Man's Voice

Bryan Anthony
Frankie de Miranda

Steve Messina
Randi Pareira

Kip Reynolds
Maurice Schwartzman

Myles Thoroughgood
Dancers

7,535 feet
84 minutes

● Tom and Jerry, cat and mouse antagonists of old, are made homeless when their house is destroyed and Tom's owner neglects to take them with her to their new home. Wandering the streets, they meet Puggsy, a dog, and Frankie da Flea, who advise them to be friends in the interests of survival. Puggsy and Frankie are dognapped by stray-catchers. Tom briefly falls in with a gang of alley cats that advocate self-interest and bad manners.

Next they meet a girl named Robin Starling who is on the lam from her evil Aunt Figg and in search of her rich explorer father. Tom and Jerry take her home, where they meet Aunt Figg's oleaginous lawyer Lickboot and her sneaky dog Ferdinand. Aunt Figg tries to dispose of Tom and Jerry by giving them to the hypocritical Dr Applecheek, who ransoms pets for money and has captured Puggsy and Frankie. Jerry helps all the animals to escape, and together with Tom they help Robin to deliverance. The three of them take to the river, but are separated after their raft is wrecked.

Robin meets up with a genial schizophrenic, Captain Kiddie, and his alter-ego Squawk the glove puppet, who decides to betray Robin to Aunt Figg in return for a reward he sees advertised on a milk carton. Once again, Tom and Jerry assist Robin's narrow escape, and they head for the family cabin, where they are met by Aunt Figg and Lickboot. The cabin catches fire, and the three friends climb onto the roof in desperation. They are saved at the very last minute by Robin's father – back from Tibet at last – in a helicopter. Tom and Jerry are ensconced in Robin's new home, happily at liberty to chase and antagonise each other forever after.

● While the credits roll at the beginning of *Tom and Jerry: The Movie*, our eponymous heroes cheerfully engage in acts of gratuitous violence that make the protagonists of *Man Bites Dog* and *Romper Stomper* look like Care Bears. As they slice each other up into ribbons and compress one another into distorted concertina shapes, these first few minutes are a touching reprieve of the bloodsports that made the duo infamous worldwide, loved by their fans, reviled by the



Grim furry tale: Jerry and Tom

high-minded, and parodied by *The Simpsons*' 'Itchy and Scratchy Show'. However, as the film progresses, it becomes clear that this introduction is not a harbinger of things to come, but a nostalgic resumé of things past.

The subsequent image of their house, a little stump of 1940s domestic architecture, surrounded by po-mo skyscrapers and about to be demolished, symbolises neatly the transition the characters are about to undergo. With the destruction of their old stomping ground, Tom and Jerry are plunged into a new realm, where different moral standards and aesthetic conventions hold sway. As they enter animated children's-feature land, all the formalised games of aggression that the duo perfected in their heyday of six-minute shorts must be eschewed. The animated feature genre demands a tamer realism and a narrative complexity capable of illustrating prescribed didactic issues, like the importance of friendship, the horrors of homelessness, the necessity of the family. Joe Barbera, who invented the characters with his long-time partner William Hanna, acted as Creative Consultant on this film. Since the television cartoons were so influential in shaping mainstream animation as we know it today, it seems appropriate that he should be in charge of updating his most successful characters. Sadly it's a bit like watching a pet owner personally declawing his cat.

Compared to most current animated features for kids, *Tom and Jerry* is better than average technically, a little gloopy with sentimentality, but peppered with ironic moments of self-consciousness that endear it. Trying to start a boat in a hurry, Jerry advises Tom to push the big red button; when asked how he knows it's the right one, he replies that "it's always the red button." Nonetheless, an elegaic mournfulness for animation's past seems to haunt the film. The opening shot evokes the neglected Fleischer masterpiece *Mr Bug Goes to Town*. Droopy, Tex Avery's favourite character, puts in a cameo appearance, while the alley cats bear an uncanny resemblance to those in *Top Cat*, one of Barbera's own old series. The funniest and creepiest cartoon allusion is the character of Captain Kiddie, the mentally disturbed puppet master, who recalls the main character in the long-forgotten early MGM series *The Captain and the Kids*. There's something comforting in knowing that old cartoon characters never die, they just get re-licensed.

For the most part, one has to sift for these moments of 'toon-buff joy like specks of gold in a pan of river silt. Director Phil Roman's most substantial work so far has been on the tepid *Garfield* TV specials. *Tom and Jerry* is a somnolent film cat of the same stripe. Like *Felix the Cat: The Movie* and other 'movieizations' of classic cartoons, it not only neuters its characters, but, failing to achieve the pathos the genre demands, sells off its birthright for a mess of kitty litter.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

RE-RELEASE

The Abyss: Special Edition

USA 1992

Director: James Cameron

Certificate

12

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

Producers

Gale Anne Hurd

Special Edition:

Van Ling

Production Associate

Christa Vausbinder

Production Co-ordinator

Laura M. Greenlee

Production Manager

Charles Skouras III

Location Managers

Tim Goldberg

Andrew Chapman

Underwater Unit

Supervisors

Al Giddings

Production:

Terry Thompson

Casting

Howard Feuer

Assistant Directors

Robin Oliver

Stephen J. Fisher

Newt Arnold

Veronica Gonzalez-

Rubio

Bob Nellans

Screenplay

James Cameron

Director of Photography

Mikael Salomon

Panavision

Colour

DuArt

Prints by:

DeLuxe

LA Surface Unit

Director of Photography

Dennis Skotak

Effects Photography

Eric Brevig

Chuck Schuman

Chris Duddy

Miniature Photography

Supervisor

Alex Funke

Matte Photography

James Green

Underwater

Director of Photography

Al Giddings

Underwater Documentary

Photography

Charles Nicklin

Underwater Miniature

Photography

Pete Romano

Camera Operators

2nd:

Paul Babin

LA Surface Unit:

George D. Dodge

2nd Underwater

Miniature

Photography:

Wayne Baker

Effects:

Terry Chostner

Harry V. Walton

Spire Rising Sequence:

John Huneck

Special Edition

Optical Camera Operator

James Lim

Steadicam Operators

Jimmy Muro

Bob Gorelick

Video/Graphic Displays

Video Image

Video Editor/Special

Edition Video Supervisor

Ed W. Marsh

Special Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Visual Effects

Producers:

Laura Buff

Jim Morris

Supervisor:

John Bruno

LA Surface Unit

Supervisor:

Robert Skotak

Supervising Producer:

Keith Shartle

Production Supervisor:

Julia Gibson

Line Producer:

Dana Schornstein

Production

Co-ordinator:

Laura Lang

Editors:

Miller Drake

Kathy Chasen-Hay

Co-ordinators:

Mike Chambers

Alison Savitch

Roni McKinley

Art Director:

Steve Beck

Dream Quest Images

Visual Effects Supervisor

Hoyt Yeatman

Industrial Light & Magic

Visual Effects Supervisor

Dennis Muren

Laser Lighting Effects

Gary Platek

Special Edition

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Denis Muren

Producer:

Ned Gorman

Co-ordinator:

Camille Cellucci

Editor:

Michael Gleason

Special Edition Additional

Wave Composites

Industrial Light

& Magic

Opticals

Consultant:

Ernest D. Farino

Supervisors:

Jeff Matakovich

Stuart Robertson

Bruce Vecchitto

Compositing:

David McCue

Marlo Pabon

Co-ordinator:

Joni Harding-Waller

Line-up:

Phil Barberio

Michael Backauskas

Special Edition Optical

Supervisor:

John Ellis

Line-up

Kristin Trattner

Special Edition Optical/

Scanning Co-ordinator

Lisa Vaughn

Matte Artists

Robert Scifo

Ken Allen

Matte Consultant

Mark Sullivan

Computer Graphics

John Knoll

Supervisor:

A. Jay Riddle

Animators:

Scott E. Anderson

Mark A.Z. Dippi

Lincoln Hu

Steve Williams

Special Edition

Computer Graphics

Technical Directors:

Stuart Robertson

Joe Letteri

Co-ordinator:

Ginger Theisen

Animation Supervisors

Jeff Burks

Wes Takahashi

Motion Control Supervisors

Michael Bigelow

Scott Beattie

Michael Shea

Editors

Joel Goodman

Special Edition:

Steven Quale

Production Designer

Leslie Dilley

Supervising Art Director

Peter Childs

Art Directors

Russell Christian

Joseph Nemec III

Set Designers

Andrew Precht

Tom Wilkins

Gershon Ginsburg

Set Decorator

Anne Kuljian

On-set Dresser

Jim Ferrell

Conceptual Designer

Ron Cobb

Conceptual Artists

Jean "Moebius" Giraud

Special Edition:

Chris Evans

Illustrator

Michelle Moen

Scenic Artist

Mike Daigle

Storyboard Artist

Phillip Norwood

Sculptures

Brian Cole

Screaming Mad George

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Joe Unsinn

LA:

Joseph Viskocil

Special Effects

David Amborn

James Fredburg

David Kirk

Richard Lopez

Jeff Machit

Robert Olmstead

Alan Rifkin

Mark Yuricich

Richard Zarro

LA Surface Unit:

Stetson Visual Services

Spire Rising Sequence

Fantasy II Film Effects

Supervisor:

Gene Warren Jnr

Production Supervisor:

Leslie Huntley

Production Associates:

Scott Beverly

Arthur Ruiz

Set Co-ordinator:

Jerry Pojawa

Model Shop Supervisor

Pat McClung

Chief Modelmaker

Adam Gelbart

NTI Beings

Steve Johnson's XFX:

Supervisor:

Steve Johnson

Production

Co-ordinator:

Kristina Birkmayer

Key Sculptor:

James Kagel

Key Mechanical:

Bruce Hayes

Hal Miles II

Movement Design:

Trey Stokes

Miniatures

Steve Burg

Radio Controlled:

Walt Conti Productions

Underwater

Supervisor:

Larz Anderson

Underwater Effects</

◀ tional crisis has worsened to the point of a shooting war, and the aliens, whose technology is based on an ability to manipulate water, have raised tidal waves at the shores of every continent, demonstrating an ability to cleanse the planet of humanity. However, Bud's self-sacrifice and evident love for Lindsey have convinced them to give humanity another chance. As the storm abates, the structure rises to the surface, taking Deepcore with it. Bud emerges, and is reunited with Lindsey.

● This 'Special Edition' is less a restoration – as was the extended version of Cameron's *Aliens* – than a look at an earlier draft. As it stood, *The Abyss* was a combination of cutting-edge *Stingray* and marital reunion drama (as was Cameron's forgotten first film, *Piranha II: Flying Killers*). Now it has a political-philosophical context that is a decidedly mixed blessing.

Whereas the restored footage of *Aliens* added emotional depth to characterisation and filled in missing exposition, *The Abyss* gains a larger international frame which was deleted in the first place because real-life events made it seem less and less relevant. A glimpse of Gorbachev in the news bulletins which seem to constitute the bulk of the 'new' material locates this supposedly near-future drama in a recent past, underlining the contrivance of Coffey's already cartoonish villainy. The film can't quite make up its mind whether he is a claustrophobic lunatic (the interpretation that Michael Biehn seems to favour) rigidly trained to robot ruthlessness or a representative of the war-mongering near-sightedness that threatens the world.

The tidal waves of the finale do give a larger meaning to the rather bathetic radio reunion of Bud and Lindsey, in that their love actually does save the world. Nevertheless they hover between awesome and silly, raised and dismissed in such a short space of

screen time that logistics are never worked out. A gradual rise of the water level would be eerier and make more sense, but impossible to convey in a few throwaway Godzilla-style crowd-panic scenes. But the real problem, which harks back to *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, is that it's hard to accept on trust the benevolence of pacifist aliens whose solution to Earth's problems is to destroy humanity if it doesn't clean up its act. The aliens can end war, whip up and dispel a hurricane, counter the effects of decompression, land a spaceship the size of Bermuda without anyone noticing, and save Bud from certain death. But the suggestion of omnipotence that resolves the film make one wonder why the NTIs were clumsy enough to kill everyone on the Montana in the first reel. Far from being masters of the sea, these Spielbergish creatures are simple slaves of the plot.

The elements that were impressive in the old version remain powerful: the evocation of the stresses of deep-sea work is unparalleled; the Hawksian professional machismo is immensely pleasurable; the water tentacle, prefiguring *Terminator 2*'s liquid technology, is a wonder; the performances cover dodgy plot turns with tough love; and the action sequences are inventive and exciting. The incredibly harrowing defibrillation sequence is one of the strongest climaxes in Cameron's work – a far more potent highlight than the final descent into the depths, with its reductive reaffirmation of marital love.

If the plot seems even more crowded now, then that is simply part of the fun of this type of peril-in-the-sea drama, an area of cinema that might be called the sub genre. It is also sad to report that the pet rat's finest hour has again been censored – the scene in which it is submerged in oxygenated water to demonstrate that it can be breathed.

Kim Newman



That sinking feeling: Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio

RE-RELEASE

Bambi

USA 1942

Director: David D. Hand

Certificate

U

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney

Story

Felix Salten, based on his book

Adaptation

Larry Morey

Story Development

George Stallings

Melvin Shaw

Carl Fallberg

Chuck Couch

Ralph Wright

Director of Photography

Chuck Wheeler

Colour

Technicolor

Sequence Directors

James Algar

Bill Roberts

Norman Wright

Sam Armstrong

Paul Satterfield

Graham Heid

Supervising Animators

Franklin Thomas

Milton Kahl

Eric Larson

Oliver M. Johnston Jr

Animators

Fraser Davis

Bill Justice

Don Lusk

Retta Scott

Kenneth Hultgren

Kenneth O'Brien

Louis Schmitt

Art Elliott

Preston Blair

John Bradbury

Bernard Garbutt

Joshua Meador

Phil Duncan

George Powley

Art Palmer

Backgrounds

Merle T. Cox

Tyrus Wong

Art Riley

Robert McIntosh

Travis Johnson

Joe Stahley

W. Richard Anthony

Stan Spohn

Ray Huffine

Ed Levitt

Art Directors

Thomas H. Codrick

Robert C. Cormack

McLaren Stewart

David Hilberman

Dick Kelsey

Al Zinnen

Lloyd Harting

John Hubley

Music

Frank Churchill

Edward H. Plumb

Music Director

Alexander Steinert

Choral Arrangements

Charles Henderson

Orchestrations

Charles Wolcott

Paul J. Smith

Songs

"Love is a Song

(That Never Ends)"

by Larry Morey, Frank

Churchill; "Let's Sing

a Gay Little Spring

Song"; "Little April

Shower"; "Looking For

Romance (I Bring You

a Song)"

Voices

Peter Behn

Thumper

Bobby Stewart

Donnie Dunagan

Hardy Albright

John Sutherland

Bambi

Paula Winslowe

Bambi's Mother

Cammie King

Ann Gillis

Faline

Mary Lansing

Aunt Ena/Mrs Possum

Fred Shields

Prince of the Forest

Bill Wright

Friend Owl

Stanley Alexander

Sterling Holloway

Flower

Tim Davis

Thumper/Flower

Thelma Boardman

Mrs Quail

Marjorie Lee

Mrs Rabbit

Marion Darlington

Thelma Hubbard

Otis Harlan

Jeanne Christy

Janet Chapman

Bobette Audrey

Jack Horner

Francesca Santoro

Babs Nelson

Sandra Lee Richards

Dolyn Bramston Cook

Elouise Wohlwend

6,283 feet

70 minutes

● Deep in the forest the woodland community learns of the birth of the new prince. The animals gather round as Bambi the fawn takes his first awkward steps. A proud stag looks down on this scene from a rocky crag high above the forest. Later Bambi makes friends with Thumper, a young rabbit, and Flower, a young skunk; together they explore their forest home and meet its other inhabitants. When Bambi is stronger his mother takes him out of the forest into the meadow, where he experiences the delight of open space; his mother warns Bambi of the presence of man in the meadow. They see other deer and Bambi encounters the stag; his mother tells him that he has met the Great

Prince of the Forest. Bambi is introduced to Faline, a female fawn who teases him and chases him until he is no longer shy of her. Their pleasure is cut short when man is scented and the deer scatter. Separated from his mother, Bambi is guided back to the forest by the stag. When winter comes, Bambi and Thumper play in the snow, but Bambi learns that winter is a time of scarcity and deprivation. At the first thaw, his mother takes him to the meadow where new shoots provide food; but man is also there, and while attempting to flee, Bambi's mother is shot and killed. The stag leads Bambi back to safety and tells him that his mother cannot be with him any more.

When spring arrives, Bambi has matured into a young stag and rediscovers Thumper and Flower, both also grown up. Owl warns them of becoming 'twitterpated' but the friends ignore his advice and set off for their old haunts. Along the way Flower and Thumper become 'twitterpated', to Bambi's astonishment; he is similarly affected when he meets the grown Faline. He fights off another young stag and he and Faline begin a romance. But forest life is devastated by the presence of hunters with dogs. Bambi defends Faline but, wounded and exhausted after a long fight, is unable to flee from the forest fire which starts as a result of the hunters' carelessness. Bambi is rescued by the Great Prince and together they leap through the flames to safety. Bambi and Faline, Thumper and Flower are all safe and the forest community soon celebrates the arrival of two new fawns born to Faline. From the rocky crag above the forest, Bambi and the Great Prince survey the scene. The older stag slips away leaving Bambi, the new Great Prince, watching over his family.

● Bambi is the highest form of anthropomorphism. Its animals are human. When Thumper is chastised by his mother and repeats the lesson he has learned – "If you can't say anything good don't say anything at all" – the child sitting behind me whispered to its mother, "That's what you say, Mummy, isn't it?". And the eruption of hundreds of childish cries and anxious questions in the packed Odeon West End when Bambi's mother dies testifies to the completeness of the identification. The animals do not mate, they become 'twitterpated'; and, in an exact reversal of normal animal procedure, it is the knowing female of the species which entices and seduces the innocent male. The dolled-up, preening rabbit in particular is determined to get her man, perpetuating the myth of the Eve-like female temptress. Other animal behaviour becomes similarly humanised, as in the rutting scene in which, in a classic case of projection, Bambi's natural territoriality becomes a display of jealousy. All this becomes confusing in the context of the animation: Disney's drawn style emphasises the animals' human qualities, but the animation is a *tour-de-force* of naturalistic movement, especially in

the scenes involving Bambi's hind legs.

Other cartooning in the Hollywood tradition stops short of this species confusion. Even when there are no human characters to contextualise the animal characters, as in *Roadrunner* or *Tom and Jerry*, the natural desire of the wolf to eat the bird or the cat to chase the mouse is the premise of the gags. Disney's predilection for humanised animal characters has earned him a reputation for 'cuteness' or worse, and spoof Disney is common in animation. But, on the sentimental front, *Bambi* is not one of the worst offenders.

Bambi is being re-released in yet another Disney distribution coup which will pull in the next generation of pre-school age children over the summer holidays. Those children will rediscover, as their parents did before them, the terrors of loss and separation from the mother and the awe-inspiring distance of the absent father. For Bambi's forest is full of single-parent families – with mother animals cast in the caring and nurturing role – and Bambi is one of the lucky few who even catches a glimpse of his father, whose protecting omnipresence is only manifest in times of danger. Strangely, the father-son relationship is never acknowledged but there can be no question that the lone, elevated and protecting stag is Bambi's father.

I remember seeing *Bambi* when I was about five. The enduring image from the film is that long-shot of the older stag and the accompanying feeling of relief that in his presence we were all safe. *Bambi* was made in 1942, when questions of gender and sexual politics did not figure in intellectual debate as they do now. However, there were many single mothers around, usually at work somewhere within the war machine, while their husbands defended them in battle abroad. But rather than being readable as metaphor for the war, *Bambi* reflects the relations between the sexes as they were at that time – an all-male buddy-buddy story with expendable (and perhaps incautious) female characters.

Why, then, does each generation of parents always unthinkingly introduce their children to culture generally and, in the case of *Bambi* to film culture specifically, through the icons of their own childhood? Isn't it time to rethink the process of cultural transmission of culture when its vehicles cease to be appropriate? It is as though our overwhelming nostalgia for our own pasts blinded us to the present-day needs of our children to move forward with the times.

Bambi, however, is an all-singing, all-dancing animation classic which, along with *Snow White* (1938), *Pinocchio* (1939), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Fantasia* (1941), comprise the best of Disney's pre-strike output. Over 50 years later, there is still very little that is comparable in either concept or execution. The film also moves through every emotion – from joy and merriment to despair and loneliness. But I wish I could be less grudging in my praise.

Jill McGreal

RE-RELEASE

The Man in the White Suit

United Kingdom 1951

Director: Alexander Mackendrick

Certificate	Duncan Lamont
U	Harry
Distributor	Harold Goodwin
Electric Pictures	Wilkins
Production Company	Colin Gordon
Ealing Studios	Hill
Producer	Joan Harben
Michael Balcon	Miss Johnson
Associate Producer	Arthur Howard
Sidney Cole	Roberts
Production Supervisor	Roddy Hughes
Hal Mason	Green
Unit Production Manager	Stuart Latham
L.C. Rudkin	Harrison
Assistant Director	Miles Malleson
David Peers	Taylor
Screenplay	Edie Martin
Roger MacDougall	Mrs Watson
John Dighton	Mandy Miller
Alexander Mackendrick	Gladdie
Based on the play by	Charlotte Mitchell
Roger MacDougall	Mill Girl
Director of Photography	Olaf Olsen
Douglas Slocombe	Knudsen
Black and white	Desmond Roberts
Additional Photography	Mannerling
Lionel Banes	Ewan Roberts
Camera Operator	Fotheringay
Jeff Seaholme	John Rudling
Editor	Wilson
Bernard Gribble	Charles Saynor
Art Director	Pete
Jim Morahan	Russell Waters
Special Effects	Davidson
Sydney Pearson	Brian Worth
Music	King
Benjamin Frankel	George Benson
Music Director	Lodger
Ernest Irving	Frank Atkinson
Music Performed by	Baker
The Philharmonia	Charles Cullum
Orchestra	F.B.J. Sharp
Costume Design	Company Directors
Anthony Mendleson	Scott Harold
Make-up	Express Reporter
Ernest Taylor	Jack Howarth
Harry Frampton	Receptionist at
Sound Supervisor	Corland Mill
Stephen Dalby	Jack McNaughton
Sound Recordist	Taxi Driver
Arthur Bradburn	Judith Furse
Scientific Adviser	Nurse Gamage
Geoffrey Myers	Billy Russell
	Night Watchman

Cast 7,664 feet
85 minutes

Alec Guinness
Sidney Stratton
Joan Greenwood
Daphne Birnley
Cecil Parker
Alan Birnley
Michael Gough
Michael Corland
Ernest Thesiger
Sir John Kierlaw
Howard Marion Crawford
Cranford
Henry Mollison
Hoskins
Vida Hope
Bertha
Patric Doonan
Frank

Alan Birnley, a prosperous mill owner, is shown round the mill owned by his ambitious would-be son-in-law, Michael Corland. In Corland's laboratory Birnley spots a bizarre bubbling apparatus that no one can explain. It turns out to have cost a fortune, and to have been set up by Sidney Stratton, the laboratory cleaner. Stratton is sacked, and Corland tells Daphne Birnley, his fiancée, that their wedding must wait while he seeks funds elsewhere. Stratton, a brilliant but eccentric scientist down on his luck, gets a

labouring job at Birnley's, where he's befriended by Bertha, a fellow-worker. Through a misunderstanding he gains access to the lab and reconstructs his apparatus. Daphne sees him there, but by confiding his plans he persuades her not to expose him. His experiment succeeds, but his enthusiasm alarms Hoskins, the head of research. Stratton is thrown out, and his work junked.

With Daphne's help, Stratton gains access to Birnley who learns his plan: an indestructible cloth that repels dirt. Given the run of the lab, Stratton causes several explosions. He eventually succeeds again, and from his cloth a brilliant white suit is made for him to wear. Rumours reach Corland, who notifies the godfather of the industry, Sir John Kierlaw. Kierlaw arrives to suppress the discovery. Birnley caves in under pressure, but Stratton resists and is imprisoned in Birnley's house. Daphne is sent to seduce him, but instead helps him escape.

Birnley's workforce, getting wind of the project, come out on strike. Stratton meets Bertha who, to prevent him reaching the newspapers, locks him in. Workers and bosses realise their interests coincide; when word comes that Stratton has escaped again, they unite to hunt him down. Conspicuous in his gleaming white suit, Stratton is pursued through the streets and finally cornered by the mob. When they grab him, the suit disintegrates: the compound is not stable. Amid roars of laughter, Stratton stands forlorn and trouserless. Next morning a relieved Birnley watches him leave. But Stratton, studying his notebook, is struck by sudden inspiration.

The small-is-beautiful, little-guys-against-authority scenario that so often figures in Ealing's films – especially in the comedies – reflects the image Michael Balcon liked to project both of the studio, and of himself. Throughout his time at Ealing he tended to see himself (not without some justification, it's fair to add) as the beleaguered but defiant maverick of the British film industry – even after having reluctantly accepted semi-autonomous status within the Rank empire. And for a while it was a stance that chimed with the prevailing mood – Britain vs Hitler during the war, people vs killjoy bureaucrats afterwards.

In *The Man in the White Suit* Mackendrick adopted the basic Ealing formula, but brought to it a sense of irony, and a level of political awareness, rare in the studio's output. It's a measure of how far he was from buying the Ealing myth that, by way of a private joke, he could model Birnley – the flabby liberal who knuckles under to the capitalist heavy mob – on Balcon himself. For Kierlaw, should we read Rank?

In other hands, the film's central conflict might have emerged as a complacent endorsement of idealism battling repressive tradition. Under Mackendrick's sceptical gaze it becomes something more ambiguous. When Sidney faces Kierlaw across the desk (one in white, one in black, as if to



Good clean fun: Alec Guinness

mock simplistic assumptions) there's a sense of underlying recognition, even identity. Both men are utterly self-obsessed, indifferent to the effect of their actions on others. It's worth recalling that the film started out as a search by Mackendrick and his co-writer Roger MacDougall for a comic way of dealing with the invention of nuclear weapons.

If *The Man in the White Suit* never quite unleashes the "attack on the myth of disinterested science" Mackendrick had in mind, it's due as much to the plot structure as to Guinness' appealing, little-boy-lost performance. The film works like an SF movie (some critics, indeed, insist that it is one), putting us firmly on the side of the character who believes the impossible. Years later, Mackendrick speculated whether he might have chosen the wrong protagonist. "If we'd made Daphne the narrator, seen it all through her eyes – then we could have made Sidney the satirical figure we wanted."

Even so, after 40 years the film still delivers a sharp satiric bite – all the sharper, maybe, with hindsight. Mackendrick's targets – the entrenched attitudes, the obsession with the short term and the bottom line, the pervasive class snobbery – seem only too depressingly topical. Only the industry has all but vanished, lending the film's documentary strain, its vistas of smoking chimneys and pounding machinery, an oddly nostalgic appeal.

But *The Man in the White Suit* would hardly deserve re-release just for being an interesting historical document. It's also witty, incisive, rich in ideas and a consistent pleasure to watch – to listen to as well, with the delectable farting-in-the-bath sound effect Mackendrick personally devised from a jazz record and a job lot of assorted tanks and tubes. Not least of the film's delights is the wealth of cherishable performances: Ernest Thesiger as the monstrous moribund old tycoon Kierlaw; Edie Martin, perennial bit player, rising magnificently to her heart-stopping denunciation ("What about my bit of washing when there's no washing to do?"); and the uniquely wonderful Joan Greenwood as Daphne, reacting with exquisite aplomb to her new-found calling of *grande horizontale*. Has any actress ever conveyed more with the single syllable "No"?

Philip Kemp

VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Damage

UK/France 1992/EV EW 1250

Certificate 18 Director Louis Malle
A hyperbolic rendering of Josephine Hart's novel. Jeremy Irons tears at Juliette Binoche's designer clothes in a display of desperate passion. Miranda Richardson steals the show in the final act. (S&S February 1993)

Death Becomes Her

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1612

Certificate PG Director Robert Zemeckis
Meryl Streep and Goldie Hawn undergo physical degeneration via the miracle of extraordinary computerised special effects. Visually stunning but lacking in narrative coherence. (S&S December 1992) □

Elenya

UK 1992/Imagine IMAG 501

Certificate PG Director Steve Gough
A whimsical reworking of *Whistle Down the Wind* in which a 12-year-old Welsh girl befriends a German fighter pilot during the Second World War. Although filmed in Welsh and English, only the latter version is available on video. (S&S December 1992)

A Few Good Men

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 14593

Certificate 15 Director Rob Reiner
Legal eagles Tom Cruise and Demi Moore overact while investigating a death at a US marine base in Cuba while Jack Nicholson gives a hammy performance as the inscrutable base boss. (S&S January 1993)

Gas Food Lodging

USA 1991/20.20 Vision NVT 16874

Certificate 15 Director Allison Anders
Adapted from the novel *Don't Look and It Won't Hurt*, Anders' debut is a startlingly effective and understated work. Two sisters struggle with the rigours of teenage life in a New Mexican town. Brooke Adams excels as their waitress mother. (S&S October 1992)

Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth

USA 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8231

Certificate 18 Director Anthony Hickox
Executive producer Clive Barker re-edited Hickox's first cut of this episodic horror-fantasy in an unsuccessful attempt to impose a narrative structure. None the less the macabre set pieces remain effective and numerous cuts originally excised by the American ratings board are reinstated, as well as two scenes originally cut by Barker. (S&S February 1993)

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1989

Certificate PG Director Chris Columbus
A crowd-pleasing-by-numbers rehash

of *Home Alone* which transfers the action to New York. Joe Pesci is endearing as the unlucky villain who takes on Macaulay Culkin. (S&S January 1993) □

Malcolm X

USA 1992/Guild G8706

Certificate 15 Director Spike Lee
Denzel Washington gives a heroic central performance in Lee's unsurprisingly overstated bio-pic of the African American leader. (S&S March 1993) □

Midnight Sting

USA 1992/MGM/UA VO 52692

Certificate 15 Director Michael Ritchie
Con man James Woods and retired boxing legend Louis Gossett Jnr take on a town in a 24-hour boxing bout in this entertaining action satire. Bruce Dern is wonderful as the slimy owner of the town. US title: *Diggstown* (S&S December 1992)

The Public Eye

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1620

Certificate 15 Director Howard Franklin
A tribute to the legendary New York photographer Weegee, this superb looking movie benefits from captivating central performances by Joe Pesci and Barbara Hershey. Cameraman Peter Suschitzky beautifully captures the flavour of Weegee's snaps. (S&S February 1993)

Sarafina!

South Africa 1992/Warner V0 12722

Certificate 15 Director Darrell James Roodt
Bold political commentary and high-kicking song and dance numbers collide in this bizarre tale of youth rebellion in Soweto. Whoopi Goldberg gets first billing but young Leleti Khumalo carries the piece. (S&S February 1993)

Singles

USA 1992/Warner V0 12410

Certificate 15 Director Cameron Crowe



Young grunge: Matt Dillon, Bridget Fonda

Crowe's bitter-sweet comedy follows the romantic tribulations of a group of variously estranged young lovers in Seattle. Superbly accompanied by one of the best rock soundtracks (REM and The Pixies among others) since *The Graduate*. (S&S February 1993) □

Wide Sargasso Sea

Australia 1992/PolyGram Video 1006

Certificate 18 Director John Duigan
Duigan's adaptation of Jean Rhys' excellent novel (a revisionist reading of *Jane Eyre*) is packed with good intentions but descends into bodice-ripping melodrama. Rachel Ward makes a mercifully brief early appearance. (S&S July 1993)

Rental premiere

And the Violins Stopped Playing

USA/Poland 1988/Odyssey ODY 349

Certificate 15 Director/Producer/Screenplay
Alexander Ramati, based on his book *Lead Actors* Horst Bucholz, Maya Ramati, Piotr Polk, Didi Ramati 124 minutes

Ramati directs his own account of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against gypsies in occupied Poland.

Bad Attitude

USA 1992/Guild 8700

Certificate 18 Director Bill Cummings
Producers Brian Miller, Leon Screenplay Crane Webster Lead Actors Gina Lim, Nathaniel de Veaux, Susan Finque, Demene Nancy Griffiths 92 minutes

A cop on the trail of villains who shot his partner during a drugs bust teams up with a mysterious woman with a deadly secret. A competent but unsurprising thriller.

Blood Love

USA 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8235

Certificate 18 Director Thunder
Levin Producer Matt Devlen Screenplay James Hankins, Adam Winston, Matt Devlen Lead Actors Tristan Rogers, Arabella Holzbog, Tyrone Power Jnr, Dawn Wells 79 minutes

A late addition to the recent slew of generally poor vampire movies. A beautiful college student becomes embroiled with a horror writer and falls under the influence of un-Godly forces.

Born Too Soon

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 336

Certificate 15 Director Noel Nossek Producer
R.W. Goodwin Screenplay Susan Baskin, based on the book by Elizabeth Mehren Lead Actors Pamela Reed, Michael Moriarty, Terry O'Quinn, Joanna Gleason, Mariangelo Pino, Elizabeth Ruscio 92 minutes

A loving couple have to come to terms with the possibility that their premature baby will not survive in this true-life TV drama.

Devil in the Flesh

USA 1993/Rio MSG 207

Certificate 18 Director Joe D'Amato
Producer John Gelardi Screenplay Vincent Rooster Lead Actors Tracy Ray, Carmen di Dietro, Nicole Grey, Jennifer Loeb, Robert La Brosse 102 minutes

Dreary erotic thriller about two mercenaries who hide out in an abandoned field hospital with a doctor, her assistant and two nurses.

Family Pictures

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 344

Certificate 15 Director Philip Saville
Producer Joe Broido Screenplay Jennifer Miller, based on the novel by Sue Miller Lead Actors Anjelica Huston, Sam Neill, Kyra Sedgwick, Dermot Mulroney 172 minutes

A superior TV mini-series compilation benefiting from sensitive direction by Saville (*Boys From the Black Stuff*) and solid performances by Sam Neill and Anjelica Huston. A couple's marital conflicts are brought to a head by the arrival of an autistic child.

Chris Wagstaff looks at three Rossellini films released on Connoisseur video

True stories

Paisà is Rossellini at his best. Six short stories set as the Americans and British worked their way up Italy, pushing back the Germans. The stories are inconsequential, the acting does not always draw us into the plot. We watch people gain knowledge about other people, and we share in that gain; we see for ourselves.

In Naples, a street urchin 'buys' a drunken black soldier in search of a whore, in order to fleece him. The 'vendor' pulls back the soldier's lip to show his teeth. The urchin hides the soldier in a puppet theatre, where white crusaders crush evil moorish pagans. The soldier collapses on a pile of rubble, fantasising about a tickertape hero's welcome back home, and remembering the shack that really awaits him. Neither speaks the other's language, and yet the boy sees the humanity in his prey, and warns him that if he falls asleep he will lose his boots.

We jump to the soldier arresting the boy for theft, marching him home to retrieve his boots, and realising that allied liberation has destroyed the boy's home and family, and consigned him to a cave and scavenging. Each sees and learns about the other in our seeing presence. If you don't see slavery and subjection behind the strong, wealthy conqueror, and if you don't care, you won't notice much, because the 'story' and 'characters' don't hammer the message home.

Seeing what's there

My students find Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* boring, because nothing happens. Exactly. We see an English couple whose marriage is in crisis seeing Naples, seeing life, birth, death and sensual classical culture, seeing, in other words, something outside their absorption in themselves. We see the pain caused by the defensive barriers that each puts up against the other. A throng of Neapolitans sweeps them apart, and their anxiety drives them to push their way back together against the throng.

Rossellini says that the essence of his neo-realist film-making is knowing and loving your neighbour. But to translate that statement into terms that make sense of how his films might promote those values, we could say that it is a matter of caring enough about what is in front of your eyes actually to see it. Responding to the mechanisms of the plot of a film and identifying ethically with the characters is the form of watching to which Hollywood had educated the viewer. Seeing a film, seeing what is being shown, is what Rossellini demands of us, and he does it by denying us the satisfactions of merely watching and responding. Of these four films released on video by Connoisseur, *Roma*, *città aperta* is the odd one out. *Roma* offers the pleasures of genre; the others deny them. *Roma* sweeps you along with the story; the others force you to contemplate a complex reality.

The ethic of knowledge and love lies behind *Roma* too, but the way it promotes



Watching, hearing and judging: Aldo Fabrizi as the priest Don Pietro in 'Roma, città aperta'

its values, and the task it sets the viewer, are different. The viewer identifies first with Pina, played by Anna Magnani, a forceful character actress taken from comedy and vaudeville. She is a woman of the people, contrasted with other women who deny their proletarian origins. Suddenly, in a masterful parallel montage sequence that blends comedy, suspense and tragedy, she is killed, and our identification moves to Don Pietro, the priest (he rushes to cradle her body in a clear allusion to the iconography of the *Pietà*), played by Aldo Fabrizi, an actor who is in many ways Magnani's male equivalent.

When the SS torture the communist partisan, the episode is recounted in a three-winged set: on one side the degenerate Nazis in their opulent lounge, on the other side the torture chamber, while in the middle sits Don Pietro, and with him, us too, watching, hearing and judging. The camera unites in the solidarity of 'the real' the characters of whom we approve, by photographing their conversations in shots in which the interlocutors are all in the frame. The characters to be condemned are isolated in the 'unreal' by being photographed singly or in reverse-angle sequences, their faces artificially lit and framed by ornate furniture.

Hence Rossellini uses the devices of realism as a code to condition the ethical responses of his viewers. Nazism and fascism are not explained; they are a 'given' evil, and we watch and judge the good cope with this evil and the bad give way to it. Sexuality is used to separate good from bad too: the Nazis are effeminate or lesbian, the collaborators prostitutes. In this narratively highly categorised world, the politics of the struggle between right and left is reduced to populism: the good-hearted common humanity of the people rising in spontaneous outrage against totalitarian evil.

Two things about this. First, it makes for a film which moves us, persuades us, and keeps us on the edge of our seats.

Second, in an Italy which had been defeated and occupied by both sides in the war, and had suffered her own civil war, the spontaneous goodness of the people seemed the only thing which could regenerate civilised community life. In 1945, with a coalition of anti-fascist parties which spanned the political spectrum co-operating in reconstructing the nation, it seemed as though that spontaneous humanity was Italy. The film, for all its artifice, represented something very real in the Italy of that moment.

But *Roma* is not a good place to go to understand what Rossellini's neo-realism was about. It is a film of transition for Rossellini. During the war he had directed 'war-effort' films about the military, combining a documentary attention to material details with doses of sentimentality: films for the Fascist government, rather than fascist films. *Roma* stands between them and *Paisà*. From then until the 60s, he pursued an aesthetic of contemplation, draining his stories of narrative drive and inviting the viewer to observe dispassionately his characters experiencing the conflicts and ambiguities of contemporary life. What inspired the enormous number of film-makers who were influenced by him (notably those of the French *nouvelle vague*) was the freedom from the conventions of cinematic narrative that his work displayed, the willingness to let the camera rest on an object or a person for its own intrinsic worth, rather than for its importance in some story.

Aesthetics and ethics

Rossellini embodies much of the aesthetic of the post-war Italian neo-realist movement, not so much because his films treat humble subjects, use real locations and non-professional performers and appear 'realistic', but because they treat the cinema as a medium for the communication of knowledge rather than the production of experience for the viewer. At the heart of the aesthetic lies an ethic impulse.

The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag

USA 1992/Touchstone TS 412

Certificate 15 Director Allan Moyle Producer Scott Kroopf Screenplay Grace Cary Bickley Lead Actors Penelope Ann Miller, Cathy Moriarty, Alfre Woodard, William Forsyth, Eric Thal 85 minutes Miller is excellent as a downtrodden wife who confesses to a gang murder in order to attract her boorish policeman husband's attention. The script is peppered with quirky dialogue and Moriarty offers top support as a loveable hooker.

Heartbeat

USA 1993/Imperial Entertainment IMP 127

Certificate PG Director Michael Miller Executive Producer Douglas S. Cramer Screenplay Jan Worthington, based on the book by Danielle Steele Lead Actors John Ritter, Polly Draper 89 minutes Gushy TV movie from the prolific pen of pulp-romance writer Danielle Steele. A pregnant TV executive is left by her husband and finds love in the arms of a divorcé father.

Homewrecker

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2746

Certificate PG Director Fred Walton Producer Robert M. Rolsky Screenplay Eric Harlacher, Fred Walton Lead Actors Robby Benson, Sydney Walsh, Sarah Rose Karr 83 minutes A pathetic computer genius working in the nuclear weapons industry develops a robot housemaid. The machine becomes jealous when the man's estranged wife and child visit in this puerile sci-fi thriller.

The Little Ninja Dragon

USA 1993/Braveworld BRV 10153

Certificate 15 Director Joseph Merhi Producers Joseph Merhi, Richard Pepin Screenplay Stephen Smoke Lead Actors Stephen Furst, Ted Jan Roberts, Shonda Whipple, Don "The Dragon" Wilson 89 minutes

A 12-year-old boy, skilled in the martial arts, joins forces with his sister to save their drunken gambling uncle from the mob.

A Midnight Clear

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14221

Certificate 15 Director Keith Gordon Producers Dale Pollock, Bill Borden Screenplay Keith Gordon, based on the novel by William Wharton Lead Actors Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Arye Gross, Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise 104 minutes Wharton's tale of an abortive truce between American and German soldiers during World War II provides the basis for a moving and intelligent drama. The fresh-faced ensemble cast is impressive and Mark Isham's score compliments the haunting, melancholic tone. Well worth checking out.

Midnight Heat

USA 1991/First Independent VA 20190

Certificate 18 Director John Nicolella Producers Kandice King, Lance King Screenplay Max Strom, John Allen Nelson Lead Actors Michael Paré, Adam Ant, Dennis Hopper, Daphne Ashbrook 90 minutes

A limp thriller interesting for its hotchpotch of mismatched players.

Dennis Hopper cruises on autopilot as a villainous drug-lord mistakenly hunting ex-dealer Michael Paré in revenge for a scam perpetrated by Adam Ant.

My Grandad's a Vampire
New Zealand 1992/Medusa MO 393
Certificate PG *Director* David Blyth *Producer* Murray Newey *Screenplay* Michael Heath *Lead Actors* Al Lewis, Justin Gocke, Milan Borich, Noel Appleby *89 minutes*
Originally titled *Moonrise* and released also under the the terrific title *Grampire*, this patchy but enjoyable comedy is held together by Lewis' charm. A deceased old man with a vampiric heritage is accidentally resurrected by his grandson and sidekick.

Nemesis
USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 20242
Certificate 18 *Director* Albert Pyun *Producers* Ash R. Shah, Eric Karson, Tom Karnowski *Screenplay* Rebecca Charles *Lead Actors* Olivier Gruner, Tim Thomerson, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Deborah Shelton, Brion James *92 minutes*
A ramshackle (even by Pyun's standards) future shocker which makes little sense. Dismal acting by French martial-arts star Gruner is counteracted by genre stalwart Thomerson's able performance. Nifty special effects.

Only You
USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 16930
Certificate 15 *Director* Betty Thomas *Producers* Morie Eisenman, Wayne Allan Rice *Screenplay* Wayne Allan Rice *Lead Actors* Andrew McCarthy, Kelly Preston, Helen Hunt, David Roebuck *87 minutes*
The impressive Helen Hunt introduces a much needed air of understatement into this otherwise overdone cautionary romantic fable. A naive young man (McCarthy) on holiday with an airhead temptress (Preston) finds true love with a more down-to-earth partner.

Passed Away
USA 1992/Hollywood Pictures D914532
Certificate 15 *Director* Charlie Peters *Producers* Larry Brezner, Timothy Marx *Screenplay* Charlie Peters *Lead Actors* Bob Hoskins, Tim Curry, Frances McDormand, William Peterson, Nancy Travis, Pamela Reed, Peter Reigert *92 minutes*
A sporadically entertaining black comedy (boasting an exceptional cast) which reworks the family trauma theme of *Betsy's Wedding* with darker results. Bob Hoskins leads as the only sane member of an estranged family brought together by the sudden death of their father.

Perfect Family
USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2745
Certificate 15 *Director* E.W. Swackhamer *Producer* Robert M. Rolsky *Screenplay* Christian Stoianovich, Phoebe Dorin *Lead Actors* Bruce Boxleitner, Jennifer O'Neill, Juliana Hansen, Shiri Appleby, Joanna Cassidy *88 minutes*
A recently widowed mother attempts to rebuild her life with a handsome stranger who is still grieving the loss of his wife and daughter in this made-for-TV thriller.

Psycho Cop Returns
USA 1993/Columbia TriStar CVT 20202
Certificate 18 *Director* Rif Coogan

Producer David Andriole *Screenplay* Dan Povenmire *Lead Actors* Bobby Ray Shaffer, Barbara Lee Alexander, Julie Strain, Nick Vallelonga *90 minutes*
Another inept and offensive film from the director of *Invisible Maniac*. Officer Joe Vickers terrorises an office stag party. The portrayal of sexual stereotypes and moral codes (sex leads to death and women are stupid) is shockingly outmoded.

Redheads
Australia 1992/Hi Fliers HFV 8239
Certificate 15 *Director* Danny Vendramini *Producer* Richard Mason *Screenplay* Danny Vendramini, inspired by the play *Say Thank You to the Lady* *Lead Actors* Claudia Karvan, Catherine McClements, Alexander Petersons, Mark Hembrow *102 minutes*
Flawed but riveting thriller. A teenage tearaway and a rookie lawyer become embroiled in a murder mystery with bizarre consequences. Inventive direction blending video and film footage and engrossing lead performances make this quality trash.

Sad Inheritance
USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 346
Certificate 15 *Director* Rod Hardy *Producer* Harvey Kahn *Screenplay* Janet Heaney, Matthew Eisen, Joe S. Landon *Lead Actors* Susan Dey, Lorraine Toussaint, D.W. Moffett, Kathleen York *89 minutes*
A former cocaine addict, whose habit caused the premature birth of her baby, fights to regain custody of her child.

Sands of Time
USA 1992/Warner VO 12669
Certificate 15 *Director* Gary Nelson *Producer* Michael Viner *Screenplay* Richard Hack, Michael Viner, based on the book by Sidney Sheldon *Lead Actors* Deborah Raffin, Michael Nouri, Elizabeth Gracen *173 minutes*
Three hour-long episodes of a TV mini-series based on Sheldon's best seller compiled to form one unwieldy whole.

Shadow of a Stranger
USA 1992/Imperial Entertainment IMP 124
Certificate 15 *Director* Richard Friedman *Producer* Hugh Benson *Screenplay* Richard Friedman *Lead Actors* Emma Samms, Parker Stevenson, Joan Chen, Michael Easton *88 minutes*
A fashion model and her attorney husband find their second honeymoon interrupted when they rescue a mysterious couple from treacherous seas in this unremarkable TV thriller.

Shootfighter
USA 1993/Columbia TriStar CVT 18638
Certificate 18 *Director* Pat Alan *Producer* Alan Amiel *Screenplay* Judd B. Lynn, Harry Feliz Jnr *Lead Actors* Bolo Yeung, Maryam D'Abo, William Zabka, Michael Bernardo, Sigal Diamant, Martin Kove *92 minutes*
An excitingly violent and vicious martial arts vehicle with muscular Yeung swapping his usual villainous role for a sympathetic anti-hero one. Despite the obvious debt owed to *Best of the Best II*, this is enjoyably senseless.

Shooting Elizabeth
USA/France 1992/Medusa MO 401
Certificate 15 *Director* Baz Taylor *Producer*

Monique Annaud *Screenplay* Robbie Fox *Lead Actors* Jeff Goldblum, Mimi Rogers, Juan Echanove, Burt Kwouk *92 minutes*
The best of Medusa's recent Euro-financed comedies. Jeff Goldblum is fabulous as a suburban neurotic who resolves to solve his mid-life crisis by killing his wife. Predictable plot and a risible conclusion, but Goldblum's insane monologues are a hoot.

Tattle Tale
USA/France 1992/Medusa MC 400
Certificate PG *Director* Baz Taylor *Producer* Monique Annaud *Screenplay* Charles Gale *Lead Actors* C. Thomas Howell, Ally Sheedy *89 minutes*
The worst of Medusa's recent Euro-financed comedies. Howell is dreadful as an out-of-work actor whose ex-wife slanders him in her best-selling book. Sheedy, however, exhibits the the same wonderfully twitchy tendencies as Goldblum (see above).

Ullterior Motives
USA 1991/First Independent VA 20192
Certificate 18 *Director* James Becket *Producer* J. Max Kirishima *Screenplay* James Becket *Lead Actors* Thomas Ian Griffith, Mary Page Keller, Joe Yanamaka, Ellen Crawford *92 minutes*
After the nastiness of *Excessive Force*, rising martial arts star Griffith turns up trumps again with another impressively anti-heroic performance. Violent political intrigues ensue when a journalist hires a renegade private eye to investigate a trading scam. Spoilt only by the weak ending which negates our hero's most despicable act of violence.

Retail

All the King's Men
USA 1949/Columbia TriStar CVR 10246
Price £9.99
Certificate U *Director* Robert Rossen
The rise to fame of a corrupt politician who manipulates the voters is seen through the eyes of a newspaper reporter. The film still retains its power and relevance. *B/W* (MFB No. 625)

Au revoir les enfants
France/West Germany 1987/Curzon CV 0020
Price £15.99
Certificate PG *Director* Louis Malle
A Jewish boy is given refuge from the Nazis by a priest at a Catholic provincial boarding school. Based on Malle's childhood experiences. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 657)

The Bad and the Beautiful
USA 1952/MGM/UA SO 50959
Price £8.99
Certificate PG *Director* Vincente Minnelli
A hard-driving Hollywood producer (Kirk Douglas) double-crosses everyone in his ruthless climb to the top. Particularly affected is an alcoholic actress (Lana Turner). *B/W* (MFB No. 229)

Bad Taste
New Zealand 1987/
PolyGram Video 0872443
Price £10.99
Certificate 18 *Director* Peter Jackson
Aliens land on earth to harvest the new fast food sensation of the universe – human flesh. The inept members of the

Astro Investigation and Defense Service (AIDS) try to cope. Peter Jackson's hysterical debut updates Romero's zombie films with a fetching line in gory knockabout humour. (MFB No. 668)

Beethoven
USA 1992/CIC Video VHR 1580
Price £13.99
Certificate U *Director* Brian Levant (S&S July 1992) 

Before Stonewall
USA 1986/Pride Video PRI 11012
Price £14.99
Certificate 15 *Directors* Greta Schiller/Robert Rosenberg
Compelling documentary about the 1969 Stonewall Inn incident in New York's Greenwich Village where the gay patrons fought back against a routine police raid, turning it into three nights of rioting. Featuring many wonderful old clips and charting the background to the upsurge in gay political activity. (MFB No. 625)

Born Yesterday
USA 1950/Columbia TriStar CVR 20022
Price £9.99
Certificate U *Director* George Cukor
Judy Holliday steals the show as a dizzy dame whose scrap iron tycoon lover (Broderick Crawford) hires William Holden to educate her. Outshines the recent remake. *B/W* (MFB No. 206)

City of Hope
USA 1991/VCI VC 3392
Price £12.99
Certificate 15 *Director* John Sayles
Sayles takes a hard look at corruption as Italian, Irish and African Americans in Hudson City, New Jersey, attempt to establish a place and identity within a well-realised cityscape. Sayles' management of the large ensemble cast is impressive. (S&S December 1991)

Curly Sue
USA 1991/Warner SO 12218
Price £10.99
Certificate PG *Director* John Hughes (S&S February 1992) 

Danzón
Mexico 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1076
Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate PG *Director* Maria Novaro
A single mother from Mexico City goes to Vera Cruz to find her missing dancing partner whom she has known for ten years through twice weekly visits to a dance hall. *Subtitles* (S&S November 1992)

Daughters of Darkness (Le Rouge aux lèvres)
Belgium/France 1971/Tartan Video TVT 1038
Price £12.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18 *Director* Harry Kümel
Audaciously camp version of the Elisabeth Bathory legend in which a female vampire seduces a young newlywed couple stranded at a deserted hotel. Interesting for its S/M subtext with the groom's 'mother' turning out to be an ageing transvestite played – in an outrageous cameo – by Dutch film-maker Fons Rademakers. (MFB No. 453)

The Defiant Ones
USA 1958/MGM/UA SO 51557
Price £8.99
Certificate U *Director* Stanley Kramer
Two convicts (Sidney Poitier and Tony Curtis) shackled together escape from a Southern chain gang and have to learn how to cope with their racial hatred of one another. *B/W* (MFB No. 297)

Enter the Ninja
USA 1981/MIA V3370 Price £10.99
<i>Certificate 18</i> Director Menahem Golan Martial arts adventure about an American who qualifies to become a Ninja and has to avoid being killed by his Japanese rivals. (MFB No. 573)
Europa, Europa
France/Germany 1991/VCI VC 3410 Price £12.99
<i>Certificate 15</i> Director Agnieszka Holland Based-on-fact odyssey of a Jewish boy who avoided death during World War II by passing himself off as a gentile, all the time trying to hide his tell-tale sign of difference – his circumcision. (S&S May 1992)
Far and Away
USA 1992/CIC Video VHR 1597 Price £13.99
<i>Certificate 15</i> Director Ron Howard (S&S August 1992) 
Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café
USA 1991/VCI VC 3405 Price £12.99
<i>Certificate PG</i> Director Jon Avnet (S&S March 1992)
Germany, Year Zero (Germania, anno zero)
Italy/France/Germany 1947/ Connoisseur Video CR 120 Price £15.99
<i>Certificate PG</i> Director Roberto Rossellini A young teenager living in post-war Berlin comes under the influence of a Nazi teacher whose creed that only the strong will survive leads to the boy poisoning his father. <i>B/W Subtitles</i> (MFB No. 562)
Grand Canyon
USA 1991/FoxVideo WS 5596 Price £12.99/Widescreen
<i>Certificate 15</i> Director Lawrence Kasdan (S&S May 1992) 
Homework (La tarea)
Mexico 1990/Tartan Video TVT 1077 Price £15.99/Widescreen
<i>Certificate 18</i> Director Jaime Humberto Hermosillo A woman invites what appears to be her married ex-lover to a romantic evening which she is secretly videotaping for her film class project. The build-up to him discovering the camera and then playing to it forms the backbone of this sexual role-play comedy. <i>Subtitles</i> (S&S August 1992)
Hors la vie
France/Italy/Belgium 1991/VCI VC 3400 Price £12.99
<i>Certificate 15</i> Director Maroun Bagdadi Finely detailed account of the captivity of a French photographer after being kidnapped by Arab gunmen in Beirut. As the prisoner becomes increasingly dehumanised, his captors in turn begin to take on a clearer identity of their own. <i>Subtitles</i> (S&S February 1992)
Jacob's Ladder
USA 1990/PolyGram Video GLD 51282 Price £10.99
<i>Certificate 18</i> Director Adrian Lyne (S&S October 1991) 
Je t'aime moi non plus
France 1976/Western Connection WEST 006 Price £14.99
<i>Certificate 18</i> Director Serge Gainsbourg



Food for thought: Timothy Spall, Jane Horrocks in 'Life Is Sweet'

A woman (Jane Birkin) meets a sullen bisexual man (Joe Dallesandro) who works with his lover Padovan as a garbageman. The two start an affair, much to Padovan's chagrin, in this misogynistic 70s period curio.
Subtitles (MFB No. 520)

Jungle Book
UK 1942/Imagine IHE 1002 Price £12.99
Certificate U Director Zoltan Korda
Shot in Technicolor splendour, this lush, straightforward account of Kipling's story stars Sabu as a jungle boy who is reared by wolves and then returns to civilisation. (MFB No. 102)

Liebestraum
USA 1991/MGM/UA SO 52498 Price £10.99
Certificate 18 Director Mike Figgis
(S&S January 1992)

Life Is Sweet
UK 1990/Imagine IHE 1005 Price £12.99
Certificate 15 Director Mike Leigh
Mike Leigh's brilliantly funny slice of contemporary suburban London life, using food as its chief metaphor, is joined by the 20-minute short feature *The Short and Curlies* in which David Thewlis plays a bad joke-cracking nerd who romances a chemist salesgirl. (MFB No. 686)

The Living End
USA 1992/Pride Video PRI 11013
Price £14.99
Certificate 18 Director Gregg Araki
An HIV positive film critic gives a drifter who is also HIV positive a lift to San Francisco and discovers that he has killed a cop. Sex, death and irreverance are mixed in an alarming but stylish cocktail. (S&S February 1993)

Lust for Life
USA 1956/MGM/UA SO 50510 Price £8.99
Certificate PG Director Vincente Minnelli
Kirk Douglas' striking portrait of the artist as a driven man is let down by the overblown production and a lack of feel for the locations that inspired Van Gogh's paintings. Even so, it still powerfully conveys the frustrations which beset the artist. (MFB No. 278)

Man Bites Dog (C'est arrivé près de chez vous)
Belgium 1992/Tartan Video TVT 1074
Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18 Directors Rémy Belvaux/
André Bonzel/ Benoît Poelvoorde

A film crew making a documentary about a serial killer in a small town become caught up in the murders. A much hyped black comedy which is unsound but wryly amusing.
B/W Subtitles (S&S January 1993)

Memoirs of an Invisible Man
USA 1992/Warner SO 12310 Price £10.99
Certificate PG Director John Carpenter
(S&S June 1992)

The Milky Way (La Voie lactée)
France 1968/Electric Pictures EP 0011
Price £15.99
Certificate 15 Director Luis Buñuel
Two Parisian tramps on their way to a shrine encounter *en route* characters who expound on the six central 'mysteries' of the Catholic dogma. Anti-establishment and anti-clerical jokes abound. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 431)

Only Angels Have Wings
USA 1939/Columbia TriStar CVR 12588
Price £9.99
Certificate U Director Howard Hawks
Hawks is on top form with this yarn about pilots who fly the mail through the treacherous terrain of Baranca, South America. Featuring Rita Hayworth in a career-lifting glamorous role and Cary Grant at his cynical best.
B/W (MFB No. 67)

Paisà
Italy 1946/Connoisseur Video CR 119
Price £15.99
Certificate PG Director Roberto Rossellini
The second of Rossellini's war triptych covers in six episodes the two years between the allied landings in Sicily to Italy's final liberation, concentrating on the encounters between the Italian people and the American soldiers.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 562)

Petulia
UK 1968/Tartan Video BDV 11092
Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 15 Director Richard Lester
Julie Christie takes centre stage as a kooky, unhappy wife of pitifully weak Richard Chamberlain. Christie courts a doctor (George C. Scott) who is himself going through marital changes. A brilliant tragi-comedy. (MFB No. 415)

Poison
USA 1990/VCI VC 3399 Price £12.99
Certificate 18 Director Todd Haynes

Three stories dedicated to Jean Genet interweave in a bizarrely enjoyable treatise about misfits in male-dominated environments. A seven-year-old boy who murders his father apparently flies away; a thief in prison reflects on past homosexual encounters and in a 50s horror pastiche a scientist spreads a virus after swallowing a serum full of distilled human sex drive. (S&S October 1991)

Rome, Open City (Roma, città aperta)
Italy 1945/Connoisseur Video CR 118
Price £15.99
Certificate PG Director Roberto Rossellini
During the last days of the war a resistance leader tries unsuccessfully to evade capture by the Gestapo. Based on the true story of Don Morosi, Rossellini's film has become synonymous with the birth of Italian neo-realism. Co-scripted by Fellini and using mainly non-professional performers.
B/W Subtitles (MFB No. 163)

Sahara
USA 1943/Columbia TriStar CVR 10663
Price £9.99
Certificate PG Director Zoltan Korda
Humphrey Bogart picks up assorted stragglers in his tank *en route* to a water-hole while trying to evade the Nazis who are also looking for water.
B/W (MFB No. 121)

Shock Waves
USA 1977/VIPCO VIP 043 Price £12.99
Certificate 18 Director Ken Wiederhorn
A diving expedition in the Caribbean releases a sunken ship full of amphibious storm trooper zombies who wreak havoc. Curiously lacking in gore, while the discovery of their Achilles' heel – pulling off their goggles – is too easy and anticlimactic. Aka: *Death Corps/Almost Human* (MFB No. 545)

Silent Scream
UK 1989/Imagine IHR 1004 Price £12.99
Certificate 18 Director David Hayman
Commendable if harrowing account of murderer Larry Winters who became one of the first inmates in the Special Unit at Barlinnie Prison. The film is non-realist, taking the viewer into the prisoner's mind during the last night of his life. Upgraded from a 15 to a 18 certificate for video. (MFB No. 681)

Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe (Edes Emma, Drága Böbe)
Hungary 1992/Tartan Video TVT 10835
Price £15.99/Widescreen
Certificate 18 Director István Szabó
Two young women in post-Communist Hungary move from the country to the city in search of a better lifestyle but find their teaching skills all but redundant and their living quarters claustrophobic. Szabó is on firmer ground after his Euro-flop *Meeting Venus*.
Subtitles (S&S February 1993)

The Talk of the Town
USA 1942/Columbia TriStar CVR 11183
Price £9.99
Certificate U Director George Stevens
Comedy with Cary Grant escaping trial having been falsely accused of arson and murder, and hiding in schoolteacher Jean Arthur's country house which she is preparing for the arrival of professor Ronald Colman. Well directed and acted.
B/W (MFB No. 108)

Tight Spot

USA 1955/Columbia TriStar CVR 14361
Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director Phil Karlson
Routine melodrama starring Edward G. Robinson and Ginger Rogers. A witness in a gangster trial is released from prison in the custody of an attorney.
B/W (MFB No. 255)

Tower of Evil

UK/USA 1972/VIPCO VIP 042 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Jim O'Connolly
Robin Askwith being skewered with a wooden stake is one of the few pleasures in this haunted house horror set in a Shetland Island lighthouse.
(MFB No. 467)

Tristana

France/Italy/Spain 1970/Electric Pictures
EP 0010 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Luis Buñuel
In one of the least complicated and assured of Buñuel's works, Catherine Deneuve, a ward of hypocritical aristocrat Fernando Rey, falls in love with artist Franco Nero but marries Rey. Deneuve shines as the innocent virgin bent on revenge. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 456)

Twentieth Century

USA 1934/Columbia TriStar CVR 11493
Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Howard Hawks
In this screwball classic, egocentric Broadway producer John Barrymore is left by the shop girl that he turned into a star (Carole Lombard) and has to pull out all the stops to win her back during a cross-country train trip.
B/W (MFB No. 543)

The Vault of Horror

UK/USA 1972/VIPCO VIP 041 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Roy Ward Baker
Vintage collection of British Grand Guignol with five men huddled together in a vault beneath the Thames recounting tales of woe. Based on the comic books *The Vault of Horror* and *Tales From the Crypt*. (MFB No. 478)

Vengeance (Joko, Invoca Dio...e Muori)

Italy/Germany 1968/Aktiv AKT 0005
Price £12.99/Widescreen

Certificate 18 Director Anthony Dawson (Aka: Antonio Margheriti)
A thief swears revenge when his friend is found dead after a failed heist. An immensely enjoyable mix of Gothic horror, thriller and Western motifs, the deaths in particular are unusually imaginative. Starring Richard Harrison who turned down a third spaghetti Western *A Fistful of Dollars*, suggesting Clint Eastwood as his replacement.
Subtitles (MFB No. 479)

Voyage to Italy (Viaggio in Italia)

Italy/France 1953/Connoisseur Video
CR 121 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Roberto Rossellini
A couple on the verge of divorce inherit a house near Naples and begin to warm to their environment. Eschewing Hollywood narrative conventions, Rossellini created a film which many regard as underrated. Starring Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders as the couple. This is the 80-minute English version, not the 100-minute Italian-language version. B/W (MFB No. 565)

Retail premiere

Flesh Eating Mothers

USA 1988/VIPCO VIP 040 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director James Aviles Martin
Producers Miljan Peter Ilich, James Aviles Martin
Screenplay James Aviles Martin,
Zev Shlasinger
Lead Actors Robert Lee Oliver, Valorie Hubbard,
Donatella Hecht 85 minutes
Lukewarm comic horror about a suburb infected with a virus that turns adulterous women into zombies.

For a Lost Soldier

Holland 1992/Dangerous To Know
DTK 008 Price £14.99/Widescreen

Certificate TBC Director Roeland Kerbosch
Producer Matthijs van Heijningen
Screenplay Roeland Kerbosch
Lead Actors Maarten Smit, Andrew Kelley,
Jeroen Krabbé, Freark Smink 90 minutes
A man reminisces about his World War II childhood when he was evacuated to the north of Holland in the winter of 1944. The young boy is fostered by a fisherman and falls in love with a Canadian soldier.
Subtitles

Galahad of Everest

UK 1991/Tartan Video TVT 1033
Price £10.99/Widescreen

Certificate PG Director John-Paul Davidson
Producers Steven Evans,
John-Paul Davidson 87 minutes
Brian Blessed retreads the fatal steps taken in the 20s by Mount Everest climber George Mallory.

Made in Britain

UK 1982/Imagine IHE 1003 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Alan Clarke
Producer Margaret Matheson
Screenplay David Leland
Lead Actors Tim Roth,
Terry Richards, Bill Stewart, Eric Richard,
Geoffrey Hutchings 76 minutes
Clarke's magnificent TV film about British nationalism stars Tim Roth as a young skinhead offender whose lack of progress through an assessment centre is charted with documentary realism. Roth's performance makes this an unsettling and unforgettable experience.

Paper Marriage

UK/Poland 1991/Curzon CV 0019
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Krzysztof Lang
Producers Mark Foster, Raymond Day
Screenplay Krzysztof Lang, Marek Kreutz
Lead Actors Gary Kemp,
Joanna Trzepiecińska, Rita Tushingham,
Richard Hawley 86 minutes
A Polish immigrant (Trzepiecińska) has a 'green card' wedding to a petty crook and struggling artist (Kemp) in Newcastle.

The Sensualist

Japan 1992/Western Connection
WEST 005 Price £14.99

Certificate 18 Director Yukio Abe
Producers Ren Usami, Tsunemasa Hatano,
Zuza Hagiwara
Screenplay Eiichi Yamamoto
Animation Supervisor Kanji Akabori 54 minutes
A middle-aged man wagers his manhood on bedding a famous courtesan on their first night. Plot strands from Saikaku Ihara's erotic novel are stunningly recreated using animation based on traditional woodblock prints. *Subtitles*

WIND UP

By Peter Dean



Craig Gilmore, Mike Dytri in 'The Living End', released by Pride Video

Browsers in the video section of the Virgin stores may be surprised to see the addition this month of a gay video chart. Virgin's move follows the extraordinary week in May this year when a Pride Video title 'Getting It Right' – a sex guide for young homosexual men – knocked Disney's 'Peter Pan' off the top of the chain's national top 20 and remained there for three weeks. A sequel to the 'Gay Men's Guide to Safer Sex', 'Getting It Right' also reached a high position in other store charts and grossed more than £500,000 during the first weeks of its release.

It appears that the bigger video stores are now beginning to acknowledge the potential of the gay market. Virgin, along with its gay top 20 chart, has created a separate section on its shelves specifically for gay films. Until recently – aside from the occasional mainstream film with a gay theme such as 'Another Country' or 'Prick Up Your Ears' – the gay community was poorly served by the video industry. But the past year has seen that change, with the censor giving the green light to more and more gay material and the emergence of three gay video labels – Pride Video, Dangerous To Know and Out on a Limb.

These labels put out a mixture of sex-education tapes, feature films, documentaries, drama, short films and erotica. This month sees the release of Gregg Araki's gay road movie 'The Living End' from Pride Video's New Queer Cinema Collection. Other recent Pride titles include the documentary 'Before Stonewall' and a collection of erotic tapes called 'EuroBoys'. Dangerous To Know has released the controversial Dutch feature 'For a Lost Soldier'. Other films scheduled for video release are the German classic 'Taxi Zum Klo' and three of Monika Treut's films, 'My Father Is Coming', 'Virgin Machine' and 'Seduction: The Cruel Woman'.

Until recently most of the available gay erotica was either under-the-counter hardcore or poor-quality exploitation. Pride Video's managing director Mike Esser comments: "The porn videos that were around before were absolutely appalling... dreadfully exploitative of the gay community... We thought, why should good-quality programming be the domain of the straight world?" Pride Video's production arm, Revelation, decided to make sex-education videos and erotica which conformed to the law and as a result discovered a lucrative export business to Europe, where previously a gay software market did not exist.

The Dangerous To Know label has taken a slightly different approach. According to managing director Tom Abel, "The idea was to try to preserve a gay art-house sensibility

and make these films accessible to their natural audience, who are sorely neglected. What we're seeing for the first time in this country is the release of films on video which have been made specifically for a gay audience."

Abel is in the process of setting up another label to release crossover films which have homoerotic subtexts or gay characters but were intended originally for a straight audience. This is a trend that other labels may follow. Commercial films that appealed to both straight and gay audiences such as 'The Boys in the Band' and 'La Cage aux folles' are currently being eyed by gay video labels which are hoping to build up their catalogues with more mainstream films and television work. An example is the 1986 BBC drama 'The Two of Us', originally broadcast with an amended 'happy' ending in which one of the lovers returned to his girlfriend. Dangerous To Know has recently released the director's cut with its original ending where the two men stay together.

The major American studios have predictably started muscling in on the gay market. Twentieth Century Fox's video label in the US surprised many in the industry by releasing the BBC drama 'The Lost Language of Cranes' – the story of a father who is forced to confront his homosexuality after his son comes out. Whether Fox has the ability to understand a gay audience as well as a smaller label such as Dangerous To Know, which is releasing the title in the UK later this year, is open to doubt. For example Fox has been selling the film by describing it as "A family picture with universal themes – the relationship of parents and kids, expectations of people you love." It has also targeted the gay market, which the company's research has revealed "earns more money and rents two to three times more videos than straight people." Hollywood knows when it's on to a good thing.



Shelley Kästner stars in 'My Father Is Coming'

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British insularity

From Professor Lester D. Friedman

As editor of *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, I feel compelled to respond to Andy Medhurst's petulant review (S&S June). My goal in fashioning this anthology was to examine an exciting period of film-making that reconfigured the British cinematic tradition, a turbulent era whose films offered a viable alternative to officially sanctioned versions of the truth. From Medhurst's narrow perspective, this book represents the worst excesses of American scholarship. Given this position, several of his charges demand a response.

Medhurst criticises the book's "sweeping assumptions" about pre-80s British film – mainly that it was boring and stodgy. Such a view, of course, represents a relatively standard critical position, one fostered (as Charles Barr notes) by British critics such as James Park, David Shipman and Robin Wood. In any case, the subtitle of the book, *Fires Were Started*, clearly recognises the importance of previous film eras; further, it directly ties the films of the 80s with one of Britain's greatest visual artists, Humphrey Jennings. The issue of auteurism also vexes Medhurst. He carps, for example, about any suggestion that Stephen Frears might exercise "creative autonomy", ignoring Professor Barber's understanding of the Frears/Kureishi and Frears/Bennett collaborations. More importantly, any book that explores these diverse films within the social context of Thatcherism clearly fits within the realm of cultural critique rather than isolated auteurism.

Most disturbing is Medhurst's characterisation of this collection as "a demonstration of American academic imperialism". Such an insular attack rings hollow on several fronts. First of all, ten of the 16 essayists are British, though most now teach either in the US or Canada. Second, if we Americans who admire and write about British cinema can be charged with imperialism, perhaps Ed Buscombe should be forbidden to write about Westerns, or Robin Wood about Hollywood horror, or Peter Wollen about Orson Welles. I must also note that Medhurst himself felt little compunction about cultural imperialism when reviewing *Affairs to Remember: The Hollywood Comedy of the Sexes* (S&S January 1992) or *Chaplin and American Culture* (Screen, Winter 1990). Medhurst's obtuse nativism ghettoises British cinema behind a wall of nationalistic insularity, a stance likely to lessen rather than broaden its impact beyond the borders of Great Britain.

Medhurst used the space allotted to castigate rather than engage, to attack rather than understand, and to censure rather than respond. Though he rightly points out some factual errors, as well as bemoaning the lack of attention paid to worthwhile directors such as Mike Leigh and Bill Forsyth, his review fails to note the broad scope of the essays, ranging from Modernism to Channel 4, from heritage films to movies about Northern Ireland, from the sale of images to the politics of sickness.

Surely something here must be worthy of more than a sentence or two of condescending dismissal.

I hope that the British readers of *Sight and Sound* will look beyond Medhurst's jaundiced view of American scholarship and approach *British Film and Thatcherism* in the spirit that informs it: not as an invasion but rather as an appreciation.

Syracuse University, US

Undemocratic BFI

From Dave Godin

Your article on independent film exhibition in the UK (S&S June) sadly failed to grasp the significance of the British Film Institute in this area, or to analyse the extent of 'independence' one is able to demonstrate when one is dependent on BFI funding for one's continued existence. Since the BFI is a notoriously undemocratic institution, rank and file members (let alone the tax-payers who bankroll it) have very little influence on BFI politics, empire-building (on the cheap), and priorities.

When our three-screen regional film theatre was threatened with closure, a petition signed by over 10,000 people was insufficient to get one spokesperson from the BFI up to Sheffield to attend any of the public meetings aimed at saving the facility. Politics prevailed, and the public lost out, and now 'enjoy' the occasional 'international film festival' which consists merely of those films which haven't otherwise been screened in the vicinity.

People would be naive in the extreme if they thought it merely a matter of money, but until we have a thorough-going Freedom of Information Act of the sort envisaged by Mark Fisher, then I'm afraid public funds will continue to bankroll private day-dreams. In the meantime, however, I am writing 'The Anvil Civic Cinema Story...' Sheffield

Editor's note: The BFI deserves an article of its own; it will have its day, in due course.

Education or entertainment

From Guy Phelps, BBFC

Peter Dean's article seemed to assume that the distinction between 'sex education' and 'sex entertainment' on video derived from some accident or "loophole". This is the opposite of the truth. Roy Jenkins' Obscene Publications Act of 1959, a liberalising measure, had two distinct intentions – "to provide for the protection of literature" and "to strengthen the law concerning pornography". To defend "literature", the Act stated that a conviction may not be made if a work is "justified as being for the public good on the ground that it is in the interests of science, literature, art or learning." Expert witnesses may be used to substantiate this claim.

BBFC policy is based on this distinction. When the Act was extended to cover film in 1977 it allowed the board to draw a line between pornography and works that are "in the interests of drama, opera, ballet or any other art, or of literature or learning."

Peter Dean may doubt the educational value of sex education tapes, but his cynicism is not shared by bodies like Relate, who have commended such material. Obviously these tapes can be viewed in the 'wrong' way, but some healthy messages are

bound to get through: sex education videos do tell useful truths about sex and relationships. Pornography, by contrast, intends only to excite and does so essentially by offering false stereotypes and untruths.

Dean also claims that "some consider it an oversight" that one particular image was not cut by the board. The formula "some say that..." is, of course, an old and long discredited way of throwing mud while absolving the thrower from the tiresome chore of having to search for evidence to support the contention. Needless to say, the charge here is unfounded.

I should also point out that, in a review in the same issue, Farrah Anwar claims that *The Evil Dead* was "never successfully prosecuted". This is simply untrue. The video, in the version as cut for cinema release in this country, was found to be obscene in magistrates courts and before Crown Court juries many times in the early 80s.

London W1

Peter Dean replies: I would like to clear up a few points in Guy Phelps' letter.

1. Despite its good intentions, a loophole is created by the 1959 OPA when applied to a medium it did not intend to cover. To assume there isn't a loophole is to ignore the links between 'art' and commerce within the video companies financing sex education videos.

2. The creator of the *Lovers Guide* series, Dr Andrew Stanway, had no senior female members on the production staff of his first video and agrees the emphasis was wrong. Relate allowed a comment of theirs to be used in the press release but no further comment has been passed. The organisation stresses that this is not due to the exposé that some couples in *Lovers Guide* were not married and one was a sex model.

3. The reason that quotes against the BBFC are often unattributed is simple – the organisation has the power to cut, delay or prohibit a video's release, all at great expense to the distributor and producer. Justified or not, members of the industry are wary of speaking out against the BBFC for fear of reprisals against their next submitted video/film.

4. The reason the two video distributors (unprompted) considered that the BBFC's letting through the ejaculation shot in *Pink Narcissus* must have been an oversight was because it seemed inconsistent with the organisation's policy of a slow, considered evolution of standards that the first such shot passed should be a long close-up with semen hitting the camera lens.

Screen violence

From Matthew G. Hampton

In a letter on violence in films (S&S June), Mary Tomlinson stated that her students do not consider a film to be worthy of merit if it does not contain a certain degree of violence. As one of her present students, I would like to take the opportunity to say that this is not so – I, for one, judge films on more than the amount of violence they contain, and would like to have my name cleared of my supposed offence.

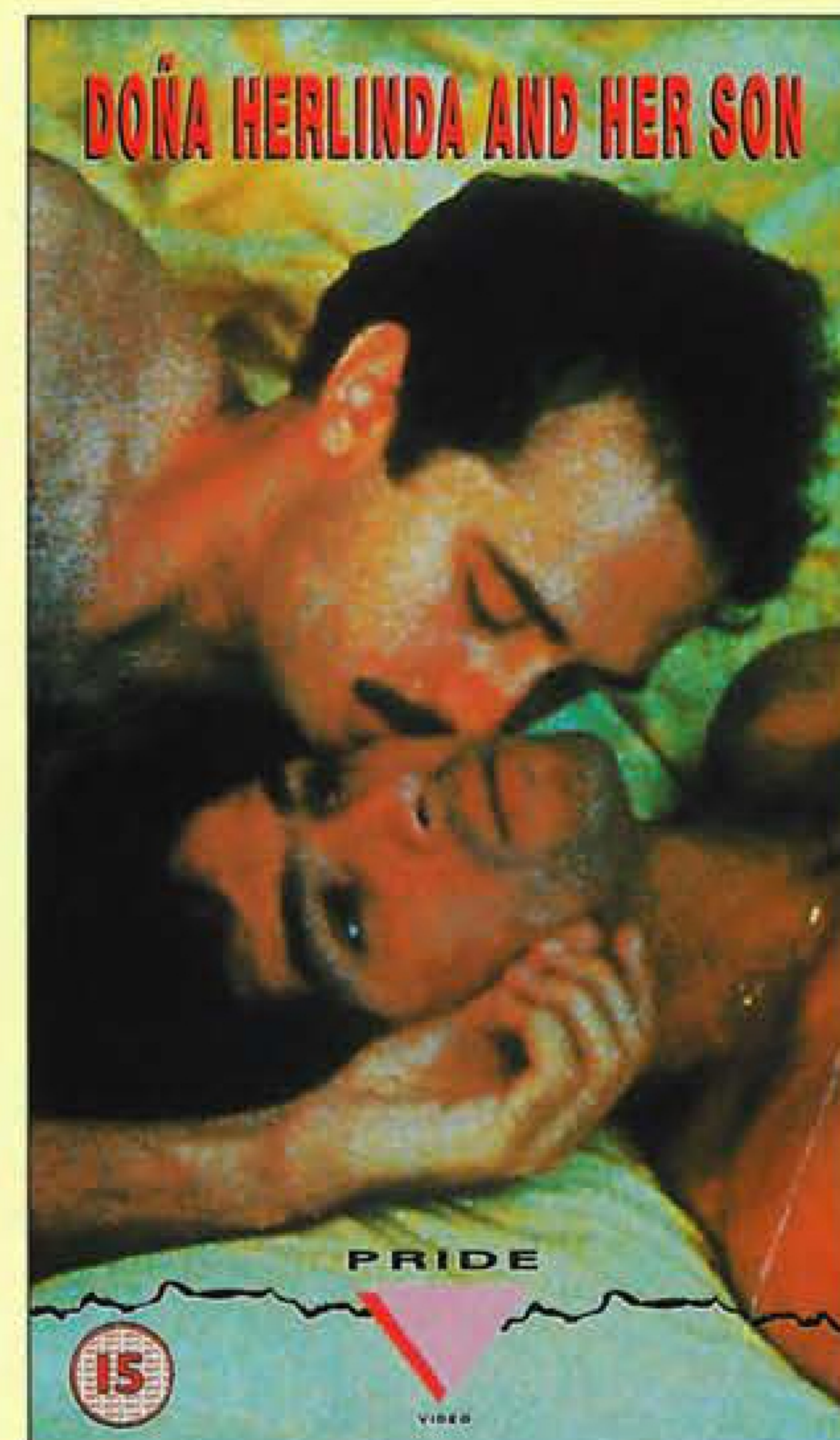
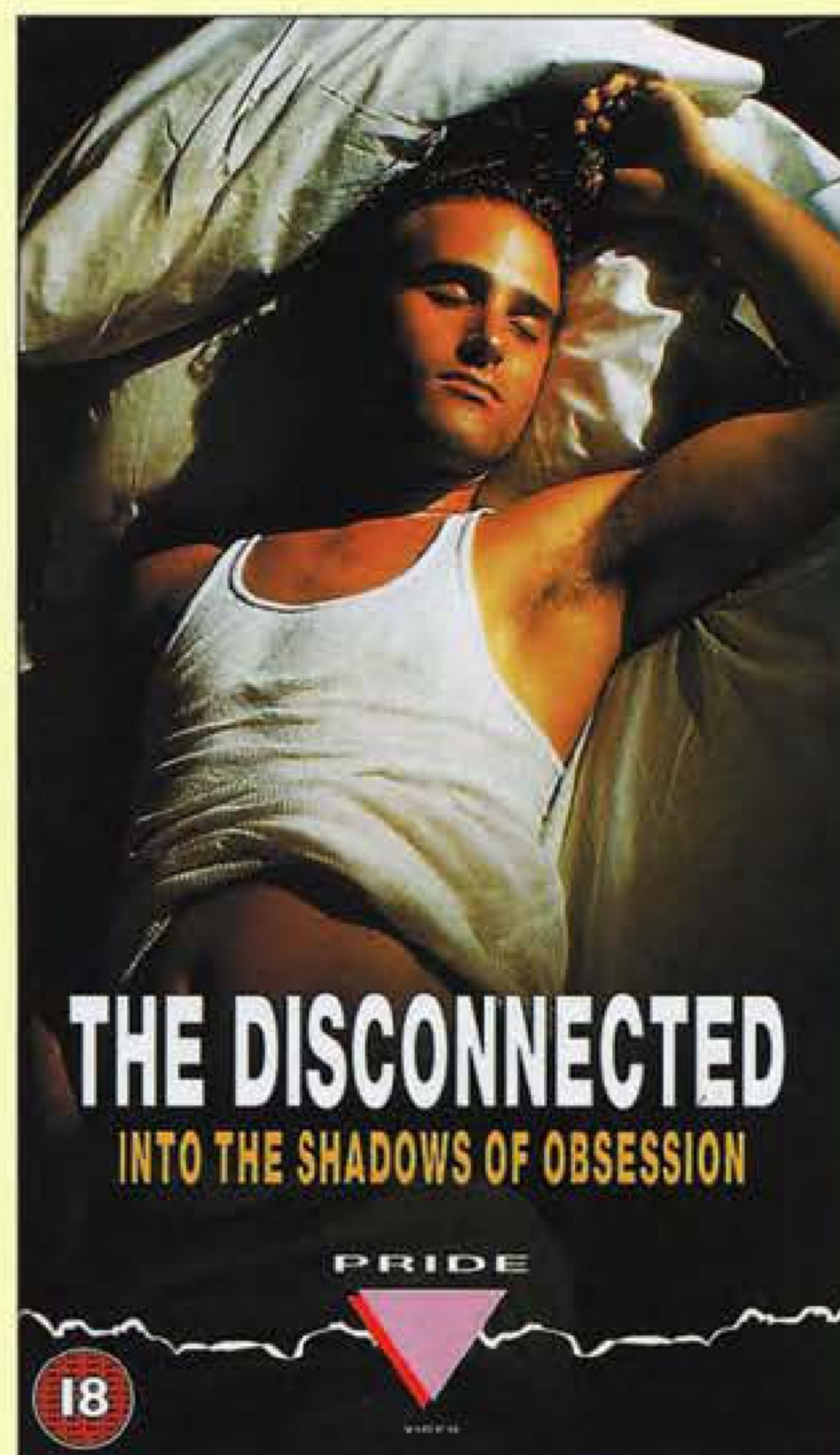
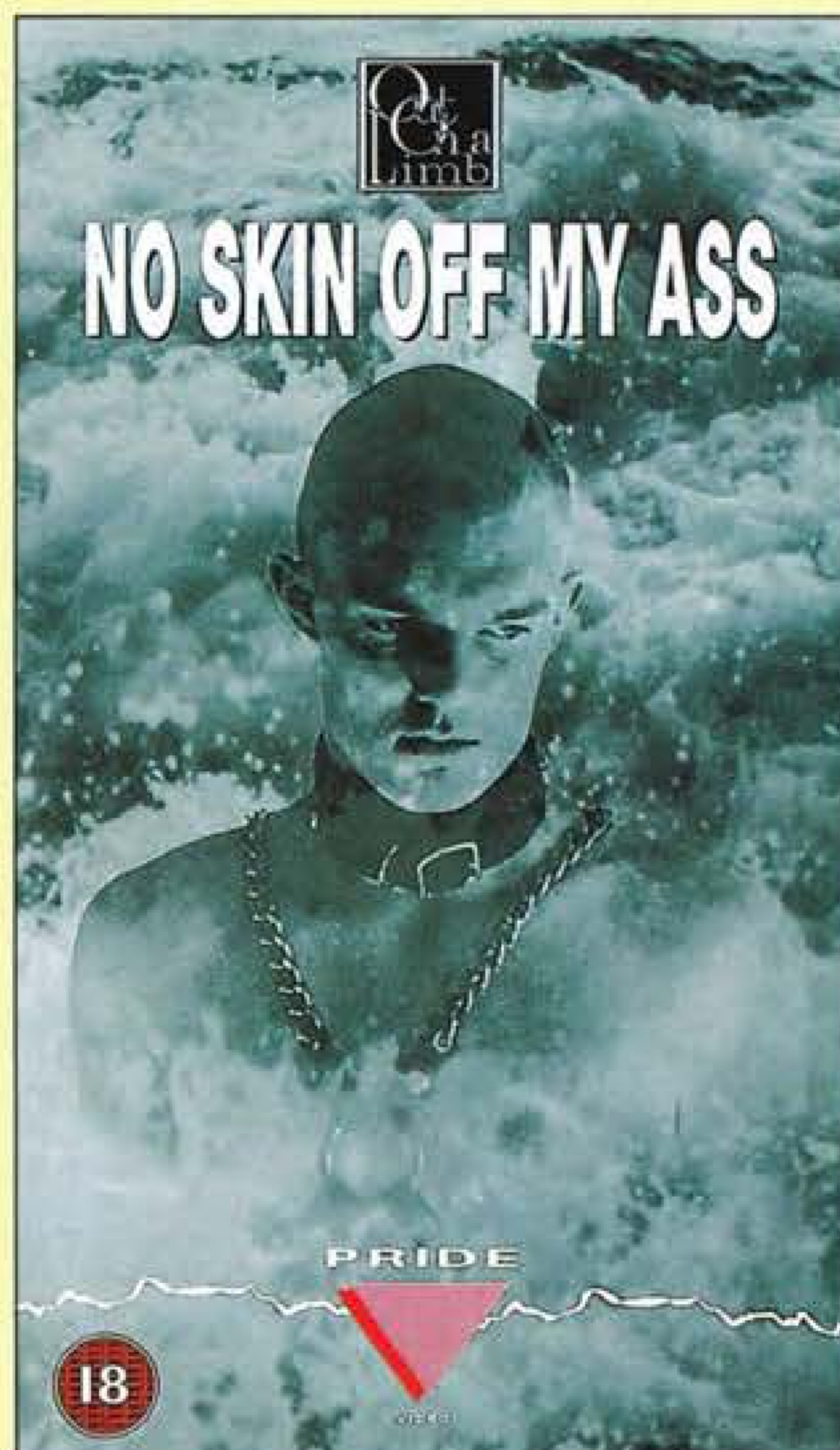
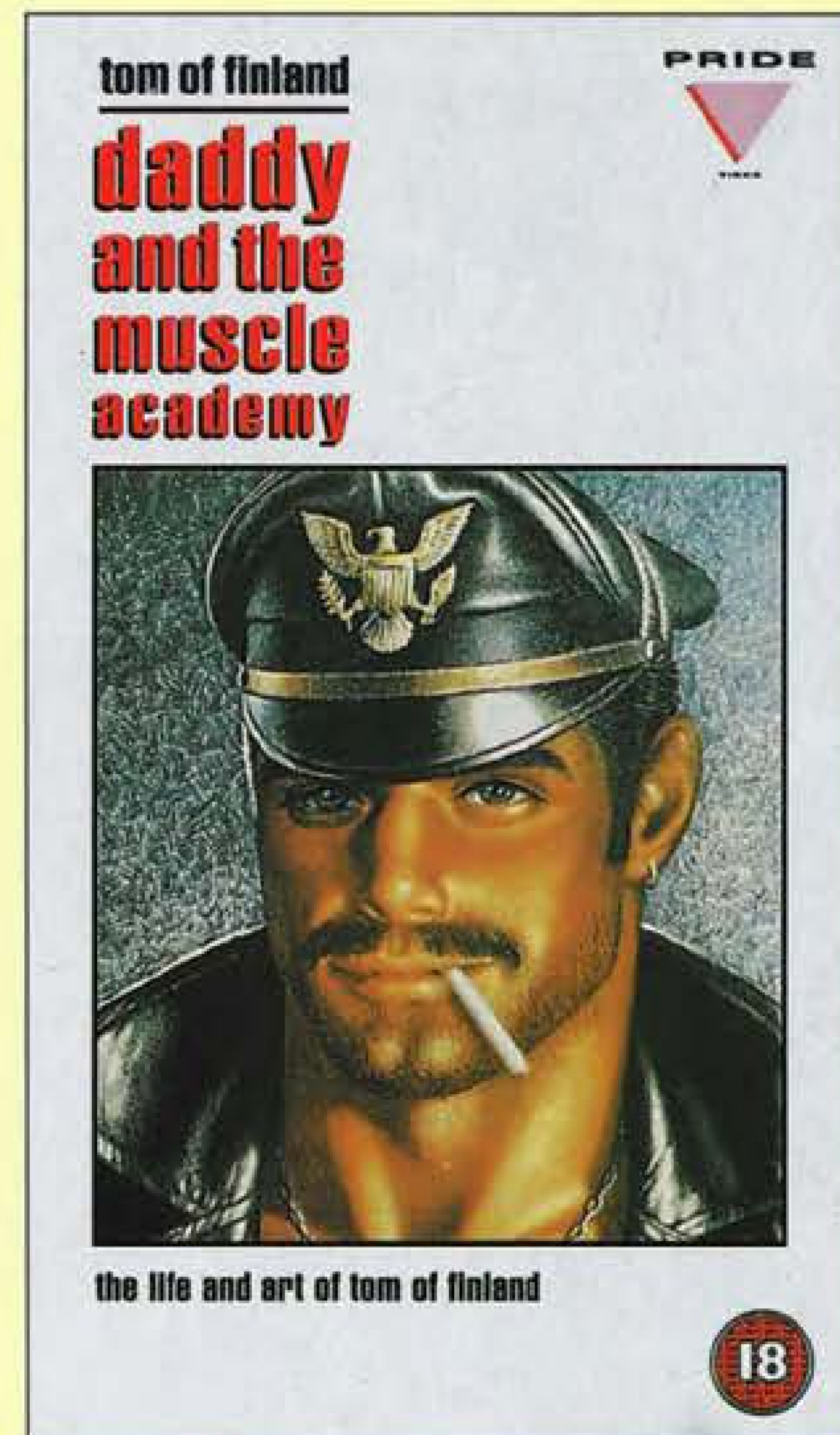
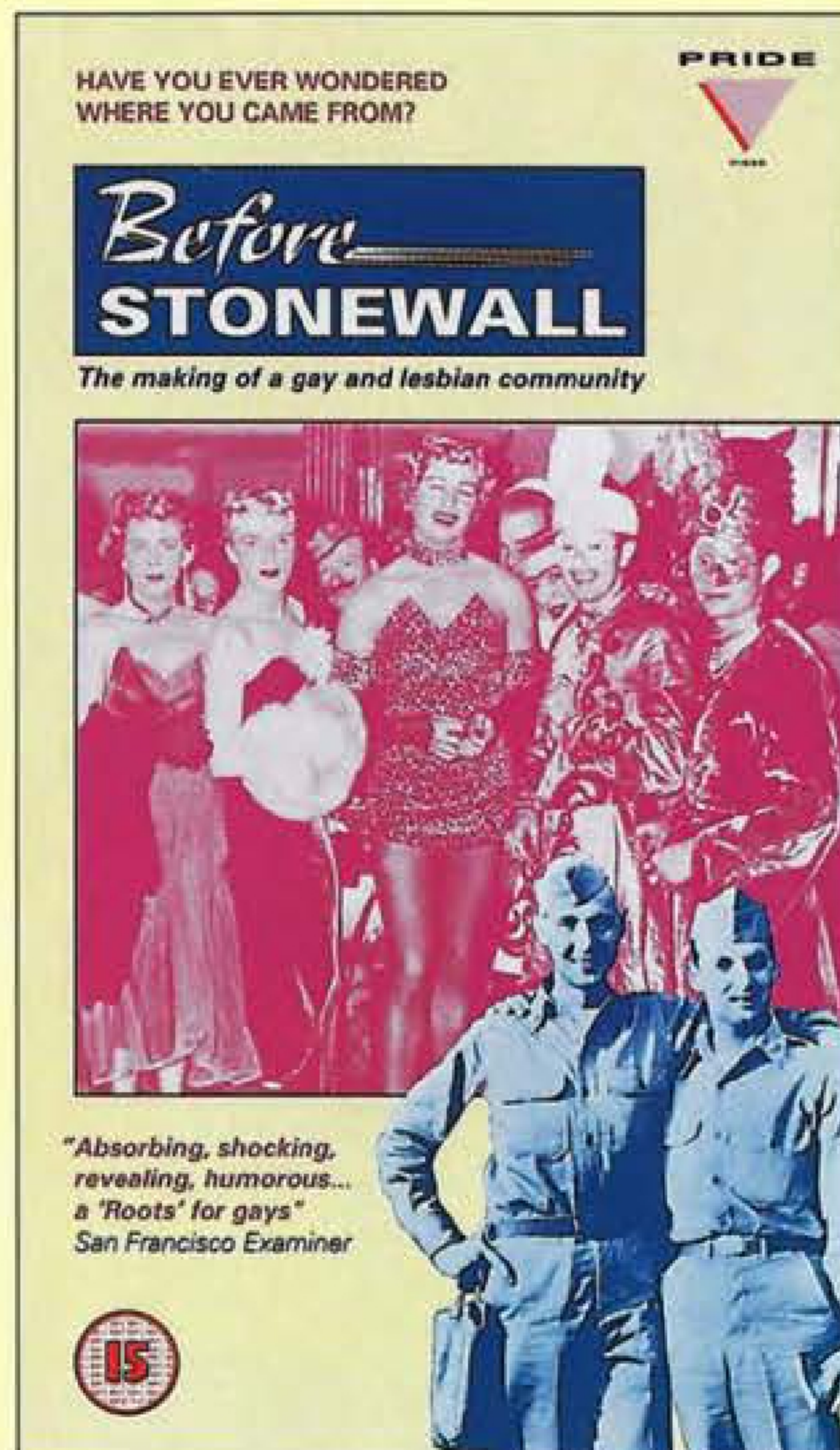
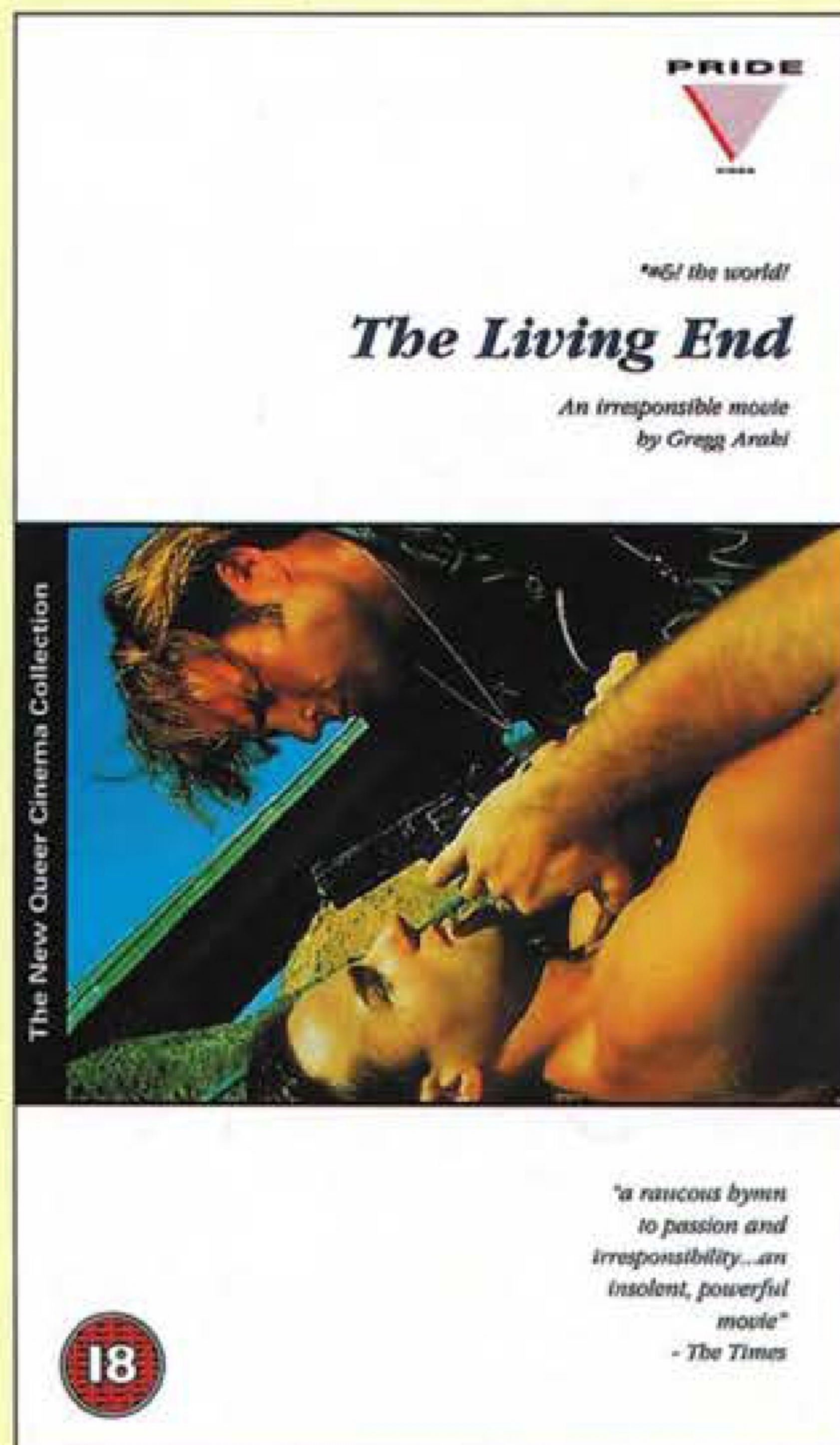
Lindfield, West Sussex

Correction

June 1993: The running time for *Army of Darkness* is 89 minutes and not as stated.

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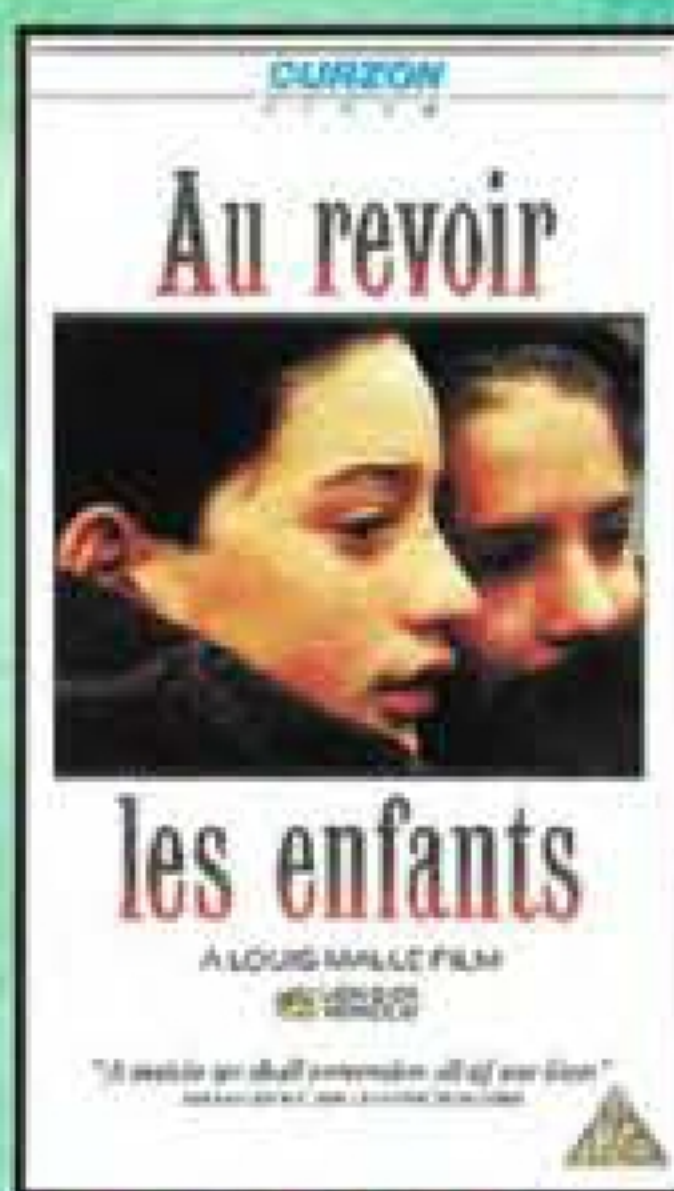
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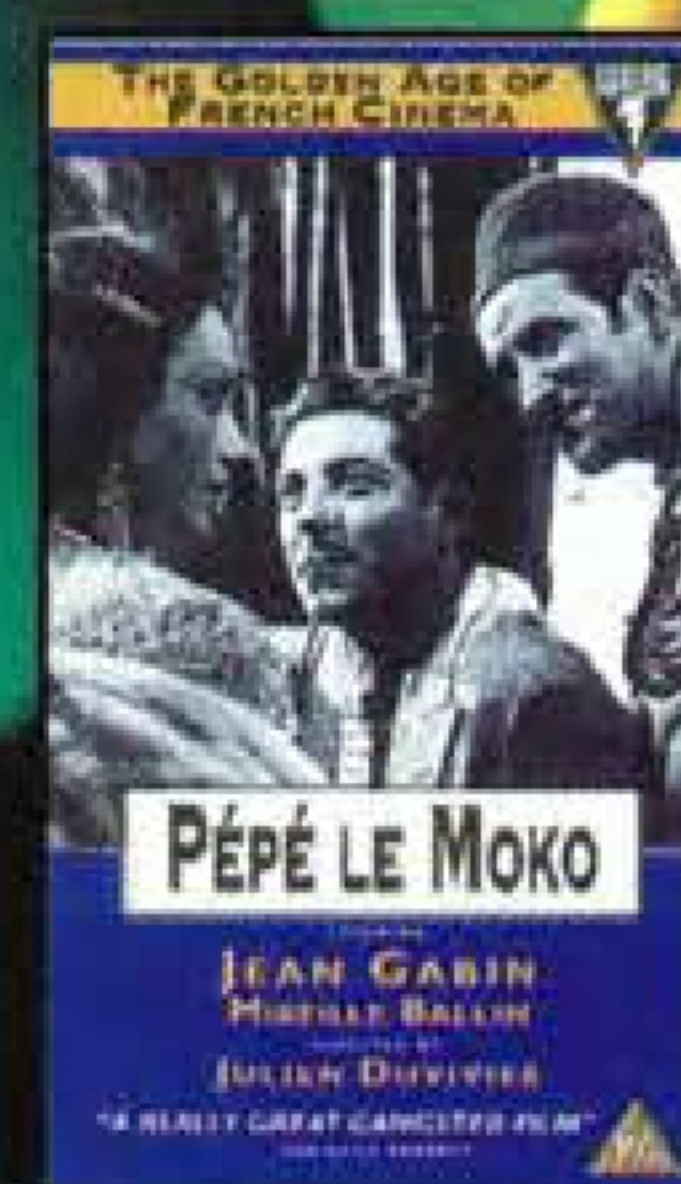
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